MY MEMORIES

FLORENCE YEO

$15.95
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My Memories

by Florence Yeo

My Memories recounts the life of an ordinary woman whose tenacity and faith carry her through extraordinary events. This personal drama of fortitude and perseverance spans the globe from the Far East and Europe to the United States and Canada.

After leading a relatively quiet life as the daughter of respected but emotionally distant Eurasian parents, Florence Yeo's life changes dramatically with the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong. When her husband, K.C., is imprisoned as a suspected spy, Florence and her three children struggle to survive with the help of friends and relatives. Even everyday occurrences become nightmares when faced with little food, clothing, or shelter. Enduring constant relocation and living for any word of her husband's condition, Florence and her family rely on their faith to brave the rest of the occupation as best they can.

Following the Japanese surrender, the Yeos journey to Australia to recover from the effects of malnutrition and disease. During the voyage home, their ship is rocked so severely by a typhoon that it nearly costs two members of the family their lives.

Yeo expresses a love of beauty and people as she describes excursions through the United Kingdom and North America; her children's education in England; K.C.'s retirement; the joy of family weddings and births; and suffering the loss of loved ones and broken marriages. Through all of their joys and sorrows, the Yeos are bound together by their caring and faith.

Prompted by her granddaughter-in-law to record her eventful life, Florence Yeo has written a book that conveys her belief in Christ and displays the bravery and strength this conviction brings to her.

About the Author

Born in Tsingtao, China and raised in Hong Kong, Florence Yeo was one of eleven children of a twice-knighted Eurasian entrepreneur and philanthropist and a Buddhist mother. At her family's urging, she recounts here in her first published work her early life in Chinese schools, many varied experiences and travels, and the powers of love and faith that guide her.

Throughout her life, Florence Yeo has expressed an interest in gardening. From her studies as an agriculture major at Lingnan University in Canton to the unusual gardens she now tends around her home, she has demonstrated her love of the earth and its natural beauty.

Mrs. Yeo and her husband participated in Bible studies and have been active in their church. Much of their leisure time is spent visiting relatives and friends and enjoying the outdoors.

Florence Yeo and her husband, K.C., now live in a residential care home in East Sussex, United Kingdom.

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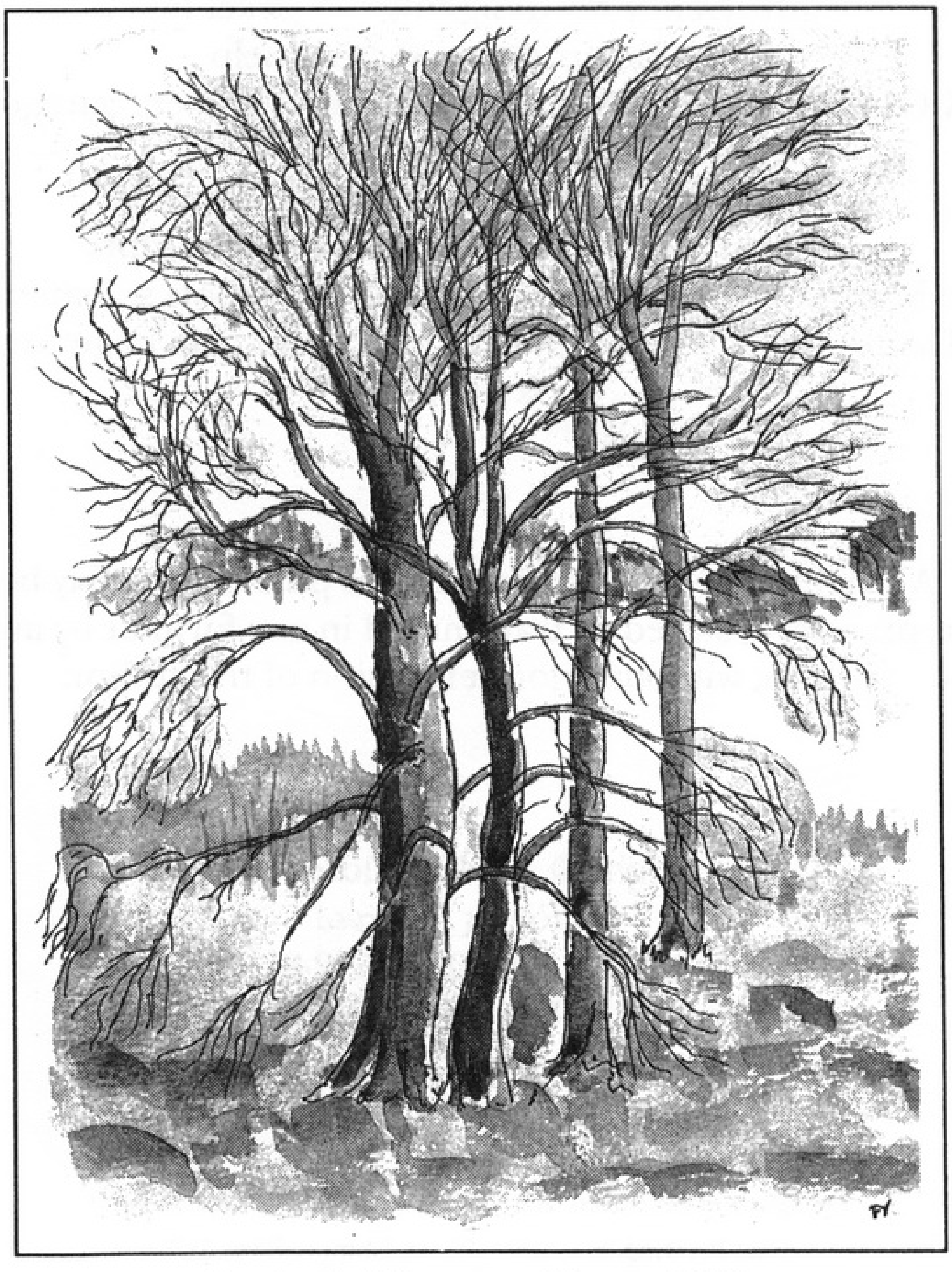
To Bunty,

With my love

John

MY MEMORIES

FLORENCE YEO



Beeches in Winter *February 1989*

DEDICATION

To my family and friends

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Barbara for "starting me off" on this book
To Wendy for designing the jacket for
the first printing and her help
To K.C., Jean, and Grace for their guidance and encouragement
To Pearl for her poem
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MY FAMILY

The generations from the long ago
Those in the now
And in the time to be
The memories,
The happenings today
Hope for the future
All these – my family.

Pearl

FOREWORD

I first met Florence eighteen months ago when I became Rector of the four parishes of which Netherfield is one.

Florence and her husband K.C. are regular members of my congregation and are committed Christians with a deep faith in God through Jesus Christ.

I have read Florence's book, "My Memories", and am fascinated by the story of her life. Everyone who reads the following pages cannot but marvel at the tremendous courage she showed in adversity. Her story is one which gives encouragement to those facing hardship and disappointment, and demonstrates beyond all shadow of doubt, that God gives to those who call upon His name, strength and fortitude to overcome all obstacles.

I consider it a privilege to be asked by Florence to contribute these few words.

David Fricker. Rural Dean of Dallington.
September, 1989.

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When I was sixteen

CHAPTER 1

My Childhood

"Why don't you write a book about all that happened to you?" my granddaughter-in-law, Barbara, said one day. This set me thinking about some of the events in my life and eventually I humbly began to write about them. I say "humbly" because I live under the shadow of my talented sisters, two of whom have already written books.

On the whole, I was a lonely child, born at the tail end of a large family of eleven. Somehow, I felt left out of things, probably because I was so much younger than the rest of the family – I arrived five-and-a-half years after my mother thought she was through with child-bearing. She was rather shy about being pregnant yet again, so disappeared to Tsingtao in North China in 1915 to give birth to me. This was the year Father was honoured with the Knight Bachelor by King George V. He used to say it was I who brought him luck. Later on, after the war, he was knighted again; this time with the Knight of the British Empire by Queen Elizabeth II. These honours were awarded in acknowledgement of his philanthropic works in Hong Kong.

"Come on, let's go and pick barley-boos" (a wild fruit, which grew in the hills near by us) "and have a game up in the hills," my sisters and brothers would say. I longed to follow them, but they'd tell me, "You're too small, you'll never catch up with us." So it was right through my childhood – this loneliness and feeling I could never catch up, nor join in their games, adventures and walks on the hills – not even being able to take part when they got into trouble and were punished for their misdeeds.

My mother, "Mamma", as we called her, was a beautiful, elegant, rather temperamental person. She loved being

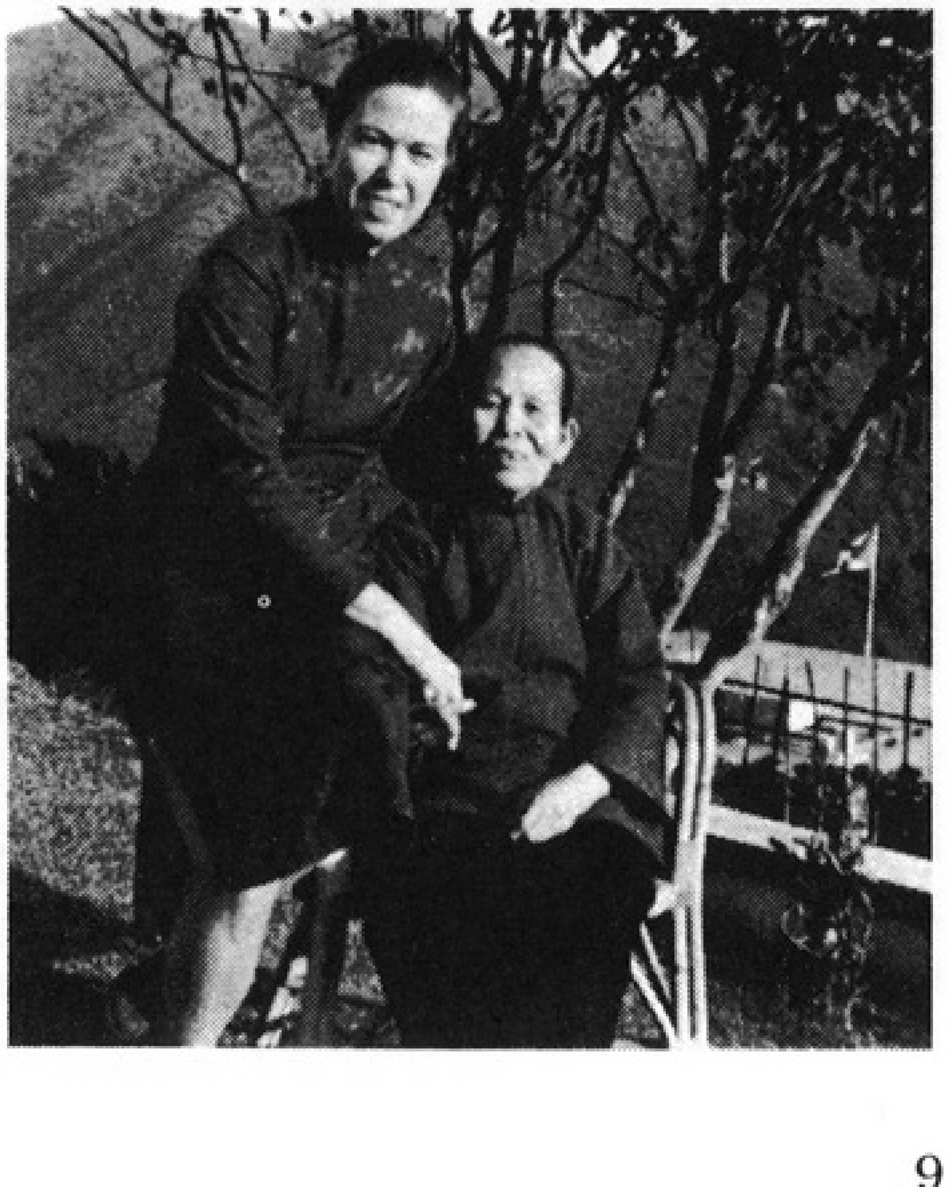
Mamma when young in European clothes

beautiful and was quite vain. She later gave up all her vanities and became a very devout Buddhist. She travelled a lot, visiting most of the Buddhist monasteries in China, India and Burma. Her greatest handicap was that her feet had been bound. In China, in the centuries before her lifetime, it was the custom to bind very young girls' feet, especially those born in higher class homes, so that they could walk like ladies (and not have to do any rough work). The arches are nearly always broken and the toes and heels bound very close together to make the feet small. This was a cruel, painful and crippling custom during the Manchu dynasty and it was one of the first things to be banned when China became a Republic.

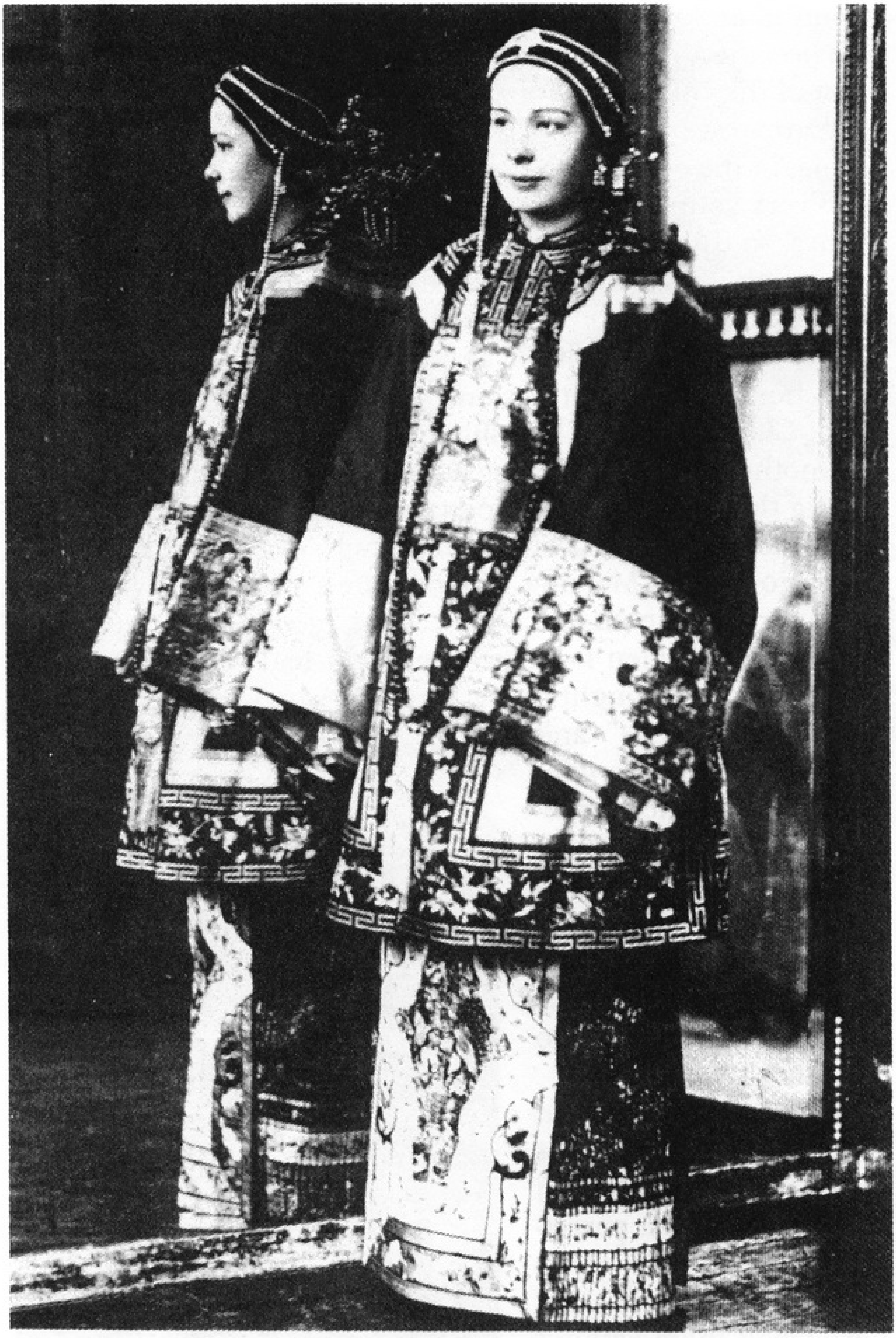
Another change in custom at that time was that men stopped having their hair plaited in pigtails. I still have photographs of my father and elder brothers in pigtails.

To go back to Mamma. She became a Buddhist by the time I was born and spent much time doing "good works" outside of her home. So when I was growing up I had very little contact with her. I was brought up by an amah, who was named Ah Oi; "Oi" means "love" and loving she was. She gave me the love, encouragement and security that I needed and I needed a lot because I was a timid and insecure child. She looked after me when I was ill and that seemed to be rather often.

A farewell picture with "Ah Oi" (my childhood amah) 1956



Ever since I could remember, Mamma was always saying her Buddhist prayers. I learned, parrot-wise, some of the prayers and ceremonies and performed them without



Mamma in Chinese ceremonial clothes

knowing their meaning. I did this to please Mamma.

"Father", as we were taught to call him rather formally, was, indeed, a very formal person. He was a self-made man, born in 1862, when the island of Hong Kong was literally a rock with a few villages dotted here and there. He was almost as old as the Colony of Hong Kong. By the time Hong Kong celebrated its centenary, he was 94 years of age and was known as the "Grand Old Man of Hong Kong".

Father was tall and handsome. Though he wore European clothes when he was young, he later always dressed in Chinese clothes, which consisted of a long silk robe, usually in various tones of blue, and a black silk, or satin, jacket buttoned down the front, with long roomy sleeves. Usually, he wore long silk trousers tied at the ankles and black Chinese shoes and sometimes, ordinary European shoes. He wore a black skull cap with a red button on the top and always looked immaculate, with every hair in his beard and moustache in its place. He was one of the few Hong Kong boys at that time who could speak English. He taught in school for a while and later joined the famous firm of Jardines as a "Compradore" (Chinese manager).

Here I quote the following interesting background information as told by my sister Jean:

> "Jardine & Matheson, Limited, was the pioneer British commercial firm in Hong Kong. It began to trade with China in the days of the clippers, which sailed from Britain to the Far East for tea and silk. But, in her struggle in America during the War of Independence, Britain ran out of cash to pay for her trade.
>
> By this time, English people had become addicted to China tea and no substitute could match the richness of Chinese silk, so that, instead of paying for the tea and silk in cash, Britain offered an exchange of goods.
>
> But China declared that she had an abundance of goods of her own and nothing but specie would be acceptable. To Britain's eternal shame, she resorted to the worst form of

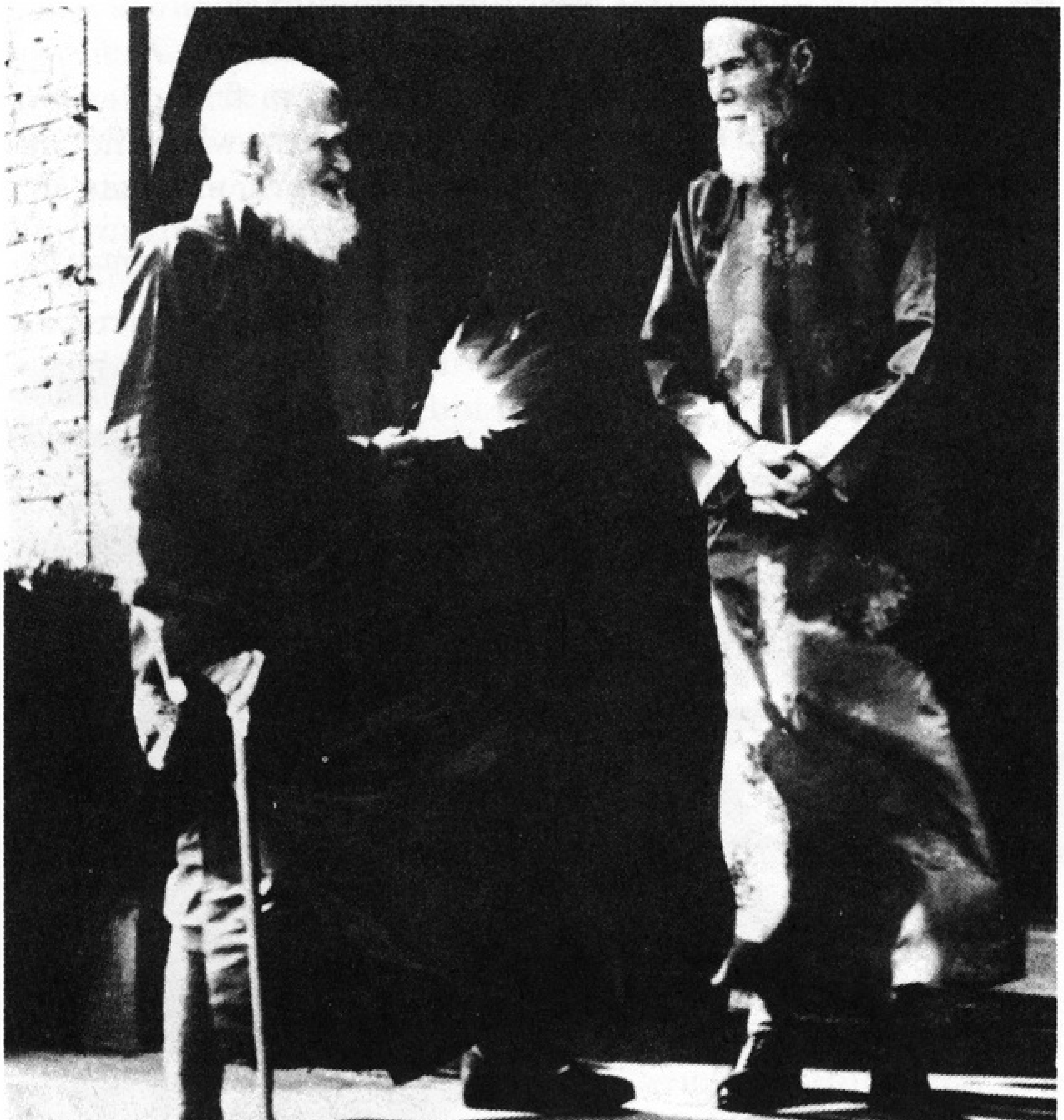
> corruption; she stepped up her growth of the opium poppy in India and introduced this addictive drug to corrupt officials in China in return for trade.
>
> Trouble began when an honest official, in the person of the Viceroy of Kwangtung deplored the subsequent damage done to his countrymen and, unable to control the use and abuse of the drug in any other way, he demanded the surrender of supplies held in all the shipping and warehouses in and around Canton and set fire to the lot. This started the Opium War, which China lost. In the subsequent Treaty of Nanking, China was forced to agree to pay in compensation for the loss of British lives and property, huge sums of money. In addition to this, because of her fine harbour for British warships, the Island of Hong Kong was ceded to Britain in perpetuity."

But, to go back to Father. From his beginning with Jardines, he went from strength to strength, investing wisely every penny he saved. He became a success. He was the eldest son of a large family: a first generation Eurasian – his father was Dutch and his mother Chinese. He was brought up by his mother according to Chinese custom. Eurasians were not accepted well in society in those days, and to be successful one had to make a choice to be Chinese or European. Father chose to be Chinese so he took on a Chinese name – Ho Tung. When he was first knighted in 1915 he was given an English name, Robert, and was known as Sir Robert Ho Tung.

It was the same with Mamma, who was a second generation Eurasian, with both parents being Eurasian (her European blood was English and Scottish). Her grandfather was Lane, one of the founders of Lane and Crawford of Hong Kong. She was brought up, like Father, according to Chinese custom.

Being the eldest son, Father helped to support the rest of the family. His father, a business man, had returned to England. Father had charming manners and a wonderful memory for faces and people, which is always an asset in business. However, his health was poor. As far as I can remember, he was always frail and needed nurses around him. He had to have a lot of rest and quiet and that is why he lived separately from us. Needless to say, we, as children, had little contact with him. He was rather reserved with us. We had to make an appointment when we wanted to see him. When we were ushered into his presence, he was always immaculate, seated on a straight-back chair, with a nurse, or servant, behind him waving a goose feather fan to keep his face cool. The fan was used even in winter at times. It was always around.

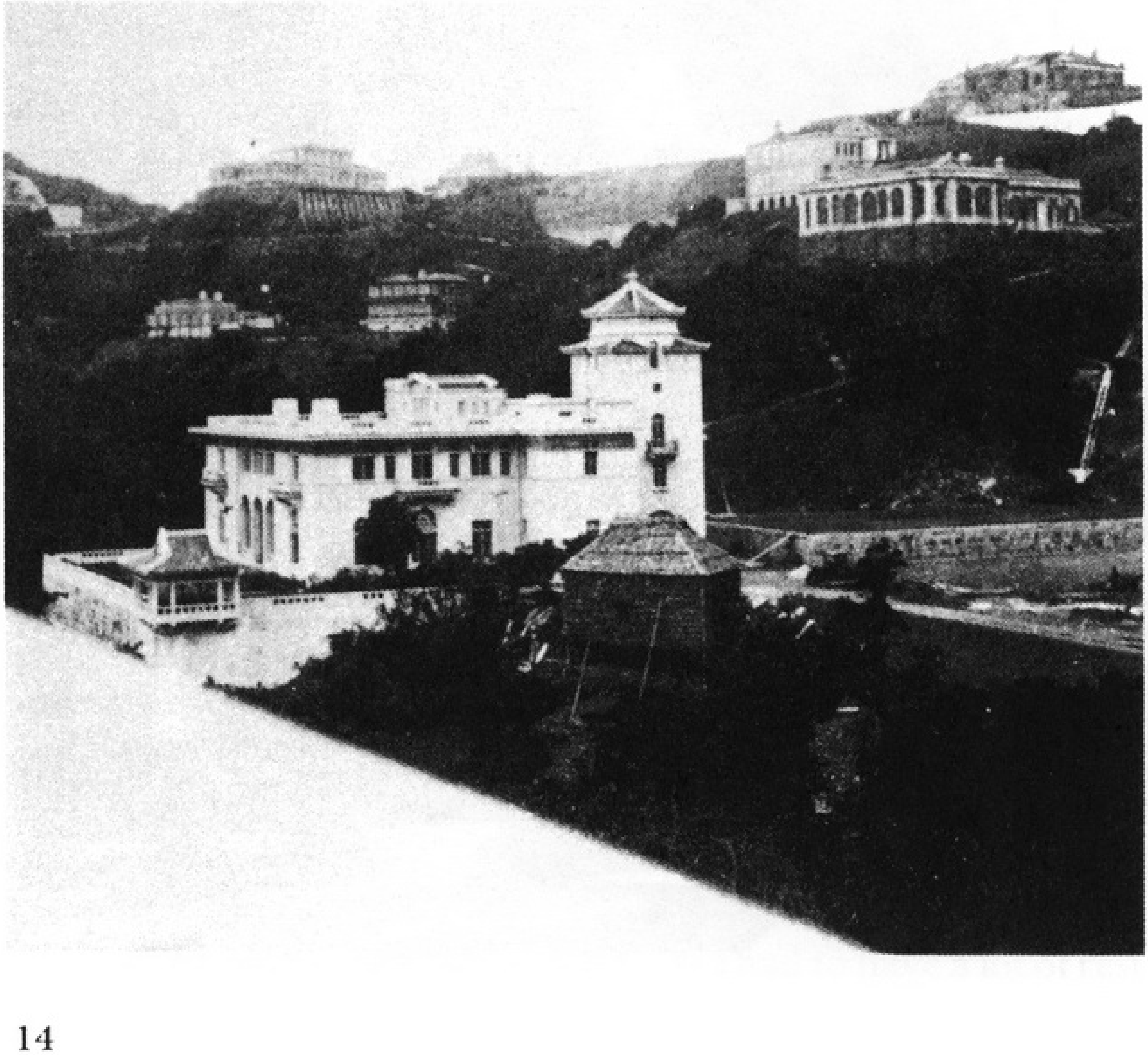
Father and Bernard Shaw



Our home was situated up on "The Peak" in the island of Hong Kong. There were two houses: one was a lovely rambling bungalow in which some of us lived with Mamma; the others lived in a two- storey house, which looked like a Swiss chalet and was, in fact, called The Chalet, although we mostly named it The Doll's House. We had two tennis courts between the two houses. The hard court on top, was used for tennis; the other was kept as a lawn. Visitors were entertained on the ground floor of The Doll's House. In the sitting room was a piano and the only time we children used this room ourselves was when we practised on the piano, or had music lessons.

Father found us too noisy since he was so frail; we were always told to tip toe and speak very quietly when he was around. But he liked being on his own – to work, meditate and

"The Falls" with the Bungalow and the Dolls House in the background



rest, so he lived in a separate bungalow nearby, a little further down the hill. The bungalow, which was our home until I left school, had a large verandah around two sides from where we could see the lovely views of the wooded hillside, which stretched all the way down to Aberdeen and the sea.

Across the sea were small islands dotted about and on some evenings we could watch the moon rise. The sea would be calm and the junks with their picturesque sails would drift very slowly towards Aberdeen, a little fishing village tucked below us. Then the lights from the tiny fishing boats would flicker on, one by one. A very romantic scene to be remembered always.

In this wide verandah were several desks, almost as many as one for each of us. I even had a little one to myself, right under the gaze of our Chinese tutor. But, unfortunately, no matter how much he gazed, he couldn't instil any of the Chinese classics into me! He was a dull teacher and could never make me understand a word of what I was supposed to recite – all I did well during Chinese lessons was to write Chinese calligraphy – a very soothing pastime, but I never knew the characters I was writing.

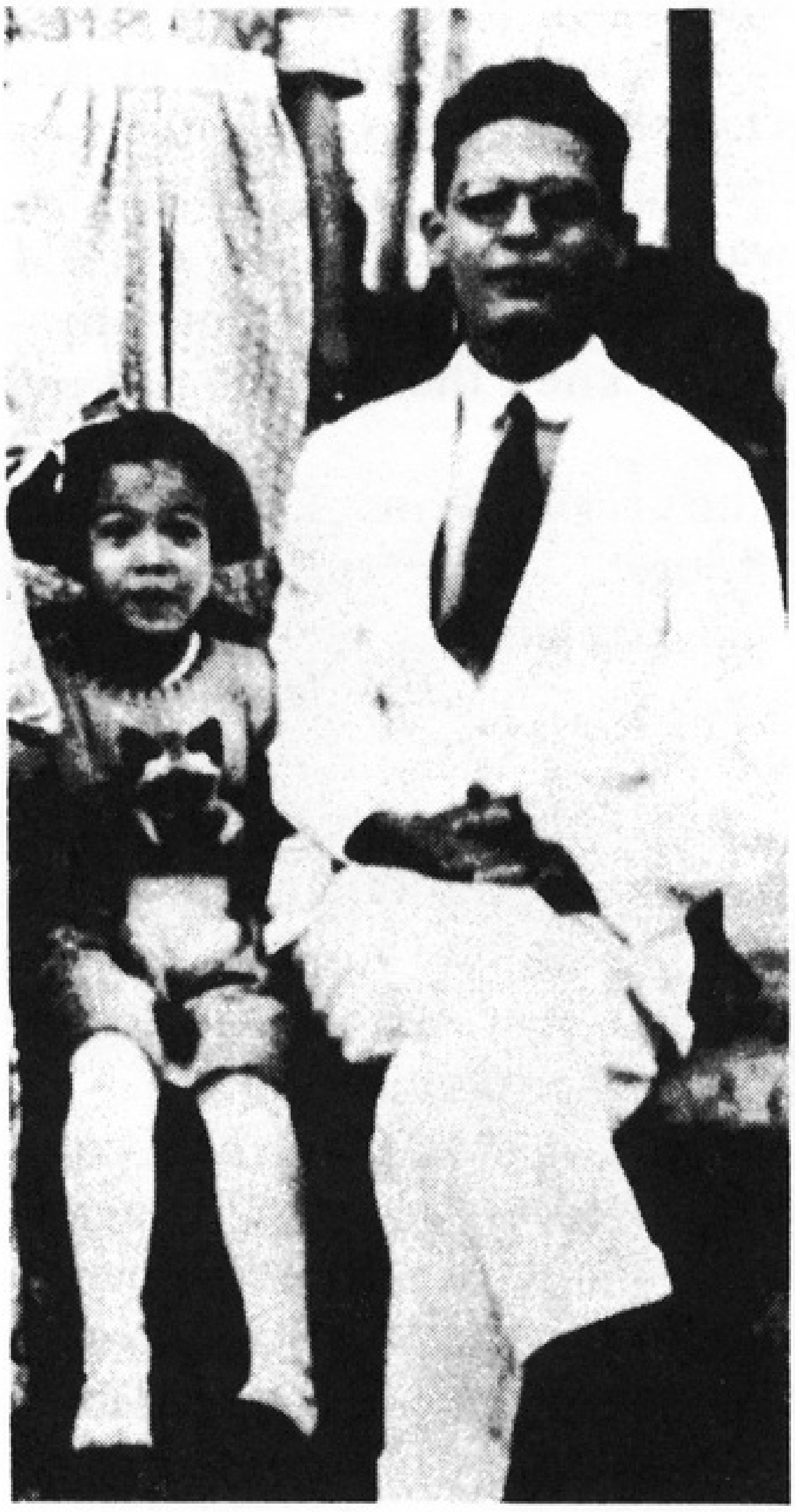
This tutor wasn't a patch on the previous tutor, who was with the family a long time and had retired. My sisters thought very highly of the old tutor, but, unfortunately, I never had the privilege of working under him.

My tutor couldn't discipline me at all and I was really naughty and would sometimes pull off his skull cap which had a tiny red button on the top, and throw it right up on to a high bookcase. He was helpless in dealing with me and all he could say was, "very naughty, very naughty!". All this did not compare favourably with my sisters' scholastic achievements.

One sister was so clever she was able to recite a whole page of Chinese classics after reading it over only once! Imagine having to keep up with *that* sort of standard – consequently, I didn't even try. This sister became a very successful doctor. She nearly married K.C., my husband, but she broke his heart when she decided not to. I picked up the pieces!

But to come back to my "education". "Where's Florence? It's her turn for a lesson now." I held my breath, pressed on the floor under Mamma's bed. I was hiding from this dreadful torture! We had a French music mistress, "Madame Mousson", I think she was called. I hated her. She was a thin, bony and strict woman, who never smiled. She terrified me. She used the ruler when I played a wrong note and that was often. So, occasionally, when I was lucky, I managed to miss a lesson. It was a very long time before I really wanted to learn how to play the piano again.

The garden around our home was terraced. It was picturesque, but must have been difficult to maintain. Luckily, labour was cheap and we had coolies. Mamma, though she could do no gardening due to her feet, was still very interested and supervised the work whenever she had any spare time and *that* was something I always enjoyed, following her and the whole retinue of servants to inspect and watch her give directions as what to do here and there. It usually consisted of making yet more terraces – in places beyond our boundary line!



Posing with Eddie (my third brother) when I was seven

CHAPTER 2

School Days

My first recollections of school were very frightening as I was sent to a Chinese school. This wasn't a *real* school as such because it was tiny and run by some elderly Chinese scholars in a couple of dark shabby rooms. I was only four years old and it was traumatic to be left in these surroundings. I didn't understand anything that was taught, not even in the language, so it seemed, as a classical scholarly language was spoken and I only spoke and understood colloquial Chinese. I just cried and cried every single day until I cried myself sick and was too ill to go to school. The family thought, perhaps,that it wasn't suitable for me after all and that I would *never* make a Chinese scholar so, instead, the following September, when I was just over four years old, I was sent to boarding school.

I think this was the most trying experience of my young life. I hadn't yet quite learned to feed myself properly and can still remember how difficult it was to put on my own shoes. Somehow, I couldn't tell the difference between the right and the left shoe and spent ages changing the shoe round – even trying them on back to front! I suppose all this was due to the fact that my amah had always spoilt me.

Each day at school, I would scream and cry and cling on to my sisters, who were going home. This upset them, too, so they had to steal away without my knowing. "Cry baby, sissy": this would greet me most mornings from the girl on the next bed in the dormitory as I would wake up on the cold floor, having fallen out of bed in the night. I woke up cold, lost and desolate.

The miserable memory of being given a bath in a cold concrete bath tub without any privacy will always remain with me. The coolies would be carrying big wooden tubs of hot water up the back stairs to the bathroom as there was no running hot water. There were four concrete tubs in a row and we children were "scrubbed down" in them. It still makes me shudder when I think of it all, but I suppose it did give me a spartan training.

I remember always being hungry, too. The last meal was at tea time, which consisted of bread and margarine, or bread and jam.

I said to myself, "Enough is enough, I'm going to get my amah to help me get out of this situation." So, when the holidays came, after suffering this for a whole year, she and I approached Father very timidly, *me* shaking in my shoes as it was the first time I had had an "Interview" with him. "Please, Father, may I not be a boarder any more? I am so unhappy and want to come home when sixth sister and seventh sister come home. (One calls one's sisters by their numbers in the family). It is horrid staying back at school." Father absent-mindedly looked at me, "What did you say?" I had to repeat myself, voice beginning to quiver, with amah prompting me. "Oh, I see, well, we'll have to talk it over, you know your mother has all the say in these matters" – a good way to wriggle out of any decision. But, taking pity on me as the tears rolled down my cheeks, he said, "I'll talk to Mamma and, perhaps, we can arrange something. Now, go and play. I've got another appointment." I went up and kissed him dutifully and gratefully and felt, *perhaps*, my troubles were over.

So, I became a day girl. "You'd better not be late, get ready in time to leave for school." My sisters were very particular that I didn't make them late. We had to start off very early as the long journey to school entailed a donkey ride to the tram station. Then we took the tram down the steep drop of about 1,000 ft. from the Peak to Mid-level. When we left the tram, sedan chairs were waiting for customers. I would share one with one of my sisters, sometimes sitting "2nd class" with my legs dangling from the floor of the sedan chair. This journey took about fifteen minutes. We then boarded the Star Ferry to take us across the harbour to the Kowloon Peninsula, where we either caught a bus, or a rickshaw, to our school. All this travelling took over an hour.

One of my sisters used the journey to do her homework, or learn whatever lesson she had to. She only did a little work at other times and yet she always succeeded in coming top of her class.

To me, school work was always a struggle. I was very much younger than most of the other girls in my class and, therefore, less mature. Consequently, I never seemed to catch up and this was not a pleasant feeling. I had no confidence to tackle anything though I always just managed to scrape through my exams to be promoted to the next class.

Our summer holidays were mainly spent at home. The heat and humidity of the lower levels could be quite unbearable. We had no air conditioning and no refrigerators. Large blocks of ice were carried up from town to place in our ice boxes to keep food cool for a while.

Occasionally, we were able to go to Father's motorised yacht for a swimming picnic in some of the lovely bays around the island, or in one of the surrounding islands – this was idyllic and we all enjoyed these times. Mamma, in spite of her feet, was able to swim and most of my sisters were taught by a professional instructor. I learned to swim later by myself when I went down to an old disused and rather stagnant swimming pool. I used a large ball and hung on to it, but occasionally pushed it along and then paddled up to it. I was so delighted at my new-found ability that I demonstrated this to my sisters one day. K.C. was there, too. I managed about four widths of the pool. The water was particularly stagnant that day, full of fallen leaves. When I got up, I felt something inside my bathing suit. I took a look in and two beady eyes stared up at me! I screamed at the top of my voice, "Help, help, there's a frog here!" K.C. came to the rescue and "fished" it out. I was teased for a long time afterwards for losing my modesty and for my loud screams, "Everyone on the Peak must have heard you!" Anyway, I was very proud to have proved that I had learned to swim by myself.

In the summer months, we were often enshrouded in mist. This gave an eerie feeling. When the "fog" descended on us, it would remain for days and we'd be trapped indoors. Our walls would drip and sweat and I'd be fascinated by the rivulets of water running down. Often, I'd press my nose against the window pane trying to see out, but, of course, there was only the wall of mist. To relieve my boredom, I would scribble and draw pictures on the misted window panes.

I often wonder how our clothes and sheets ever dried. There were so many of us to wash for. I remember washing hanging about the boiler room dripping and dank. Sometimes, a fire would be lit when the damp chill got too bad.

It was just as well we had so many servants and each had a specific job. There were the "wash" amah, the cook, the odd job amah, and each of us children had an amah to look after us, though, sometimes, we would share one. They became part of our family and lived with us. A few remained till they were old and Father remembered them in his will, giving them sanctuary in our home for the remainder of their lives. Sometimes, our home looked like a retirement home!

We grew up with many animals. There were two donkeys on which we took turns to ride to the tram station on our way to school. The "donkey-man" would be at the tram station to bring the donkeys back home. They were kept in the upper tennis court by day and stayed in their stable at night – the stable was part of our bungalow, as far as I can remember! A monkey also lived there – it belonged to my brother, who, somehow, managed to train it to frighten me! The monkey would oblige by looking for me each time it was let loose and biting me on the legs – this really terrified me and I would scream at the top of my voice. All this in the days before they thought of rabies, which was quite common among dogs in Hong Kong and often the dogs had to wear muzzles. We had innumerable dogs. So many, in fact, that we, as children, each owned one. There were the terriers and the Hong Kong "Chow" dogs. The Chows would be the guard dogs, guarding the three paths which led down to our bungalow and to the Doll's House. They were wonderful dogs, very independent and dependable. The terriers and the inevitable mongrels (there was no such thing as spaying dogs in those days) would follow us around, jump on our beds when the amahs weren't looking and chase the chickens. Mamma only kept hens for eggs, because being Buddhist, she didn't eat fertilised eggs.

Two of my sisters kept bees in the lower lawn and I always got stung as I ran about the lawn so much. Another of my dislikes was the cockatoo, which one of my sisters owned. It screeched loudly and more than once I suffered from its sharp beak.

All in all, we loved having our animals around and I learned the joys and comfort of possessing a loving dog to whom I used to tell all my secrets and my hurts. A dog never fails to give love and devotion and never lets one down.

I spent much time on my own, riding a tricycle up and down the tennis court, imagining games with myself, talking to myself and dreaming dreams. I tried to keep away from adults, who always spoilt my make-believe world by bringing me down to earth, usually with the words, "Haven't you anything better to do? Have you finished your homework? Don't you have any exams coming up? What about some revision?" How I hated it all. My heart sank. I was never good at school, so had no incentive to work.

As the years went on, Mamma and Father began to plan to build a larger house for us nearby, a little lower down the hill, but still facing the same bay and islands. This seemed to take years and years – everything had to be of the very best. I vaguely saw sheets of plans being poured over and changed and re-changed till, eventually, in about 1929, it was finally built. It was named "The Falls" because it was beside a mountain stream, which ran down a very steep slope to become a small waterfall. Mamma had built a little Chinese pavilion near it and said she would retire there when "all my worldly work is done and I can just sit and meditate and say my prayers". This, of course, never came to pass as she was such an active and busy person, always doing her "good works". She died quite young, at the age of 62.

In the grounds of this vast house, Mamma had built a Chinese pagoda, and the swimming pool (in which I learned to swim), was beautifully re-built with tiny blue tiles. The lovely clear spring water which ran into it was always inviting in the hot summer months. Two changing rooms were built nearby on either side of a romantic moon gate. From this gate, a little path led up to the immense pagoda, which was lit up in the evenings when we had visitors.

In the terraced garden, Mamma had two Chinese rockeries constructed, one near the swimming pool and the other near the house. They were like Chinese paintings of the jagged mountains. Various Bonsai plants were planted in these rockeries.

There were the usual two tennis courts near the back of the house and a lovely wide terrace on the south side where one could linger and watch the changing colours of late afternoon skies, the fishing boats and the sea mists. At one corner of the large terrace was built a little pavilion with a green tiled Chinese roof and up-curved corners, which matched the roof of the house. This was a favourite place for most of us to sit when we lived there because it was always cool in summer.

Needless to say, all the animals were moved down, too, which included a huge tortoise. It was so large that in later years when I brought my children back to visit, they would ride on its back. It lived for years and years until well after the war.

Though this lovely spacious house was built to house the whole family, unfortunately, the time spent making it perfect was so long that most of my sisters were grown up and had gone their own ways, some abroad for further post-graduate studies and some to get married. Actually, I was the only one left who wasn't going too far. But, in a very short time, I, too, was to move to study in Lingnan University, Canton.

Downstairs in our new home were huge living rooms. The walls were beautifully lined with oak panelling and the furnishing of the sitting and dining rooms and bedrooms (except mine) were especially ordered from Lane & Crawfords in Hong Kong. The library was furnished in Oriental style and so was the very large main hall. There was much blackwood furniture inlaid with mother-of-pearl. The chairs were not comfortable to sit on, being rather hard, but were very decorative and cool to use in the summer. The chandeliers were sent out from England and the well polished parquet flooring was of selected teak wood. A lovely wide stairway led up to the first floor. Half way up the stairs was a special room with bathroom and pantry/kitchenette, which Mamma planned for a sickroom. She was very medically minded for her generation and was a wonderful nurse when we were ill. (It was almost worth being ill because I got her love and attention). The only thing I disliked was her passion for castor oil floating on top of a cup of warm water – *and* enemas!! She had a certain presence around her that used to make me feel better as soon as she entered the sick room. I shall never forget her visit to me in hospital when I had just given birth to Wendy, our youngest. She had not been well, but she made a supreme effort and I remember how ill she looked – my heart went out to her with thankfulness and compassion. During the last few years, after our marriage and as the children arrived, I grew to love and understand Mamma much more and we became very close.

Another unusual room we had in "The Falls" was Mamma's "chapel". In this Buddhist sanctuary, Mamma spent many hours praying, sometimes waking up at three in the morning. There were two altars in the chapel, one side was for worshipping Buddha and on the other side were placed the tablets of our ancestors. On each wooden tablet was written the name of an ancestor and, as time went on, when an elderly member of the family died, another tablet would be added. They were placed upright on the altar. The more venerated ancestors had larger tablets. Fruit and incense were offered and food on memorial days. We had always to go every morning and evening to "pay our respects" to our ancestors and also during their birthdays and their memorial days, which meant we had to "kow-tow" three times. We also had to do likewise to Buddha. There was always the smell of incense being burnt and sometimes the quiet chanting of Buddhist prayers, some of which we knew because we were taught as little children, but, unfortunately, I never knew what they meant.

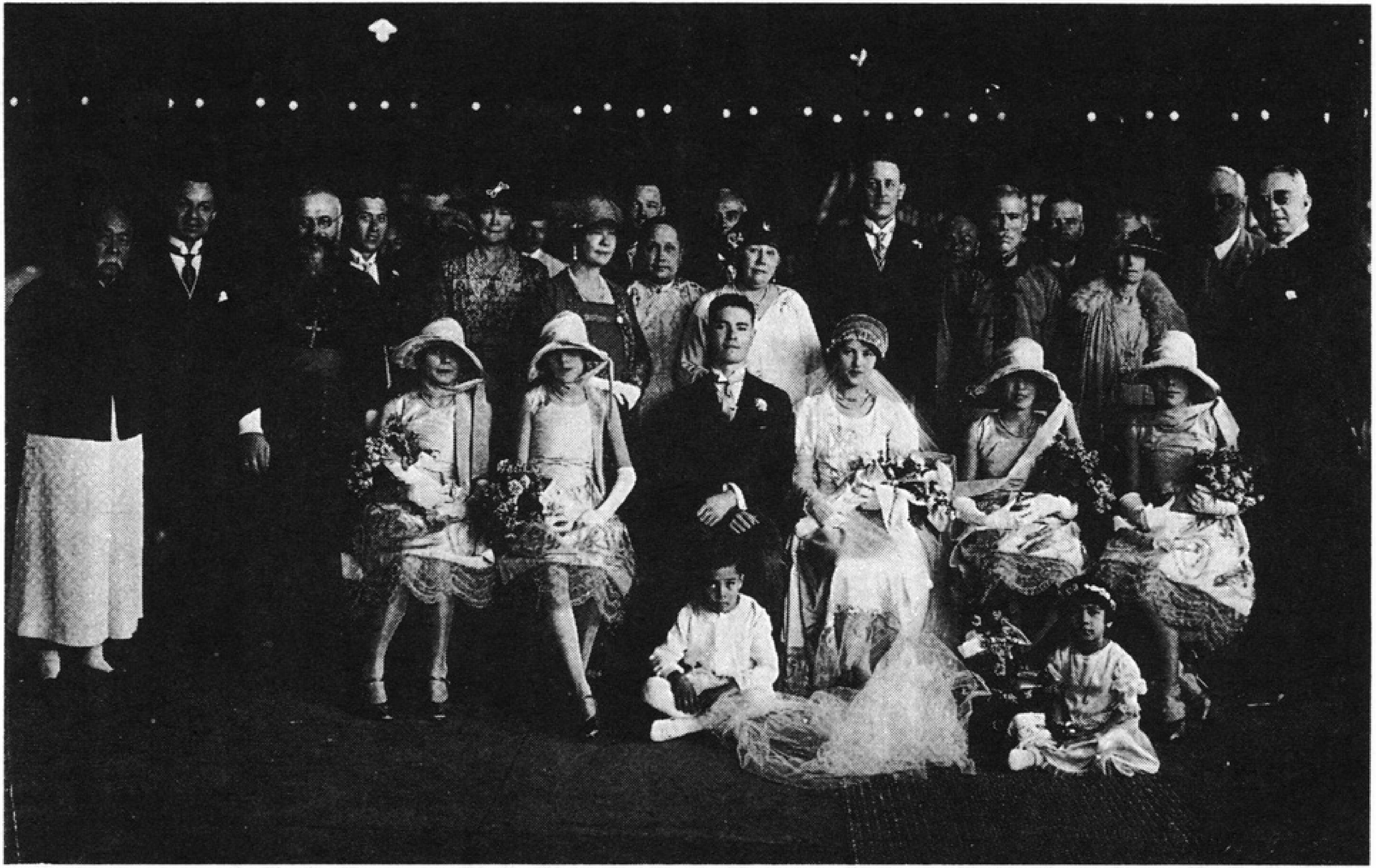
There were altogether seven very large bedrooms with attached bathrooms and a large hall upstairs in which, when the family was assembled, we took our family meals.

Up on the flat roof was a sun room with special ultra violet ray glass where we could sunbathe in the winter. Mamma was, indeed, very health conscious!

I was beginning to grow up. I had very few friends who could visit our home, except on my birthday, or, perhaps, for a few days during the summer holidays. I suppose this was because we were so isolated living up "in the wilds" of the Peak, and there was no public transport near our house.

I began to think of my own life and wondered why I wasn't a success like my sisters. I began to believe the stories which were told me by my older sisters and some of the servants, that when Mamma was up in Tsing- tao she found a dirty Shangtung coolie woman sitting in the street, stinking of garlic, with a baby in her arms. Mamma took pity on this baby and bought her for twenty cents and brought her home. This baby was me! I was named Florence after Florence Nightingale. I thought – "Well, this must be true – this explains why I'm not as successful or as clever as my sisters and certainly not as pretty." I felt an ache in my heart and a great loneliness and isolation. It was during this period, when I was 12-13 years old, that a young medical student used to come up to our house. I knew he was very much in love with my sister, Eva, and he was her devoted slave. He was content just to be near her, never demanding, and she would always be busy with her books, studying very hard for her medical course in the Hong Kong University. His name was K.C. Yeo.

Gradually, I used to turn to K.C. to tell him all my hopes and my problems. He always had a listening ear and I regarded him as a very good and well-trusted friend. Little did I know what the future would hold. Later, when we moved to "The Falls", K.C. was the only permanent resident there besides Mamma. She welcomed "a doctor in the house".



As bridesmaid at Robbie (my fourth brother) and Hesta's wedding. (I'm next to the bride!)

On 6th June 1928, my brother, Robbie, who had finished his military training in Woolwich, was married to Hesta, who came from a family well- known to my parents. They made a lovely couple and I was one of the four bridesmaids. I was absolutely thrilled to be chosen and to have a lovely new dress to wear!

There was great celebration and a large bamboo pavillion was constructed in the grounds of Idlewild, Father's town house, to accommodate the hundreds of guests. Just about *everyone* was there! Besides the banquets and feasting, I think a Chinese light opera was performed on a stage specially built in the pavillion. I remember my fifth Uncle, who dabbled in Chinese opera and magical tricks, also performed on the stage – I was quite impressed. All the celebrations seemed to have lasted for days: the Chinese love celebrations and family gatherings.

By the time I was thirteen, I was in my last year at school. I had taken the Junior Cambridge exams and, to the delight and relief and utter amazement of my teachers, I scraped through. I had become a nervous, "teary", timid child, completely without self-confidence. I was now in the matriculation class, with the rest of my classmates, on average, two-and-a-half years older than I. This fact wasn't pointed out to me and I'm sure this accounted for my utter desolation in "not being able to catch up". We also had a very severe, strict and fierce headmistress, who now took most of our lessons.

At this time, my sister, Irene, had graduated. She was about to go to Lingnan University to teach. Irene had always been kind to me and always found the time to help when I was a day girl, for which I have always been grateful. She is eleven years older and often I would go in desperation and tears to her with my homework, struggling with my sums and not knowing how even to begin to work out the problems – "can't do my sums", I would sob. She showed a lot of interest in my welfare, so she went to see the Head to enquire about how I was getting on. The Head gave her a very frank opinion of what she thought of me and my work; it is hardly worth putting down. Irene said, "Well, perhaps, she could wait a year before she attempts the final exam and, in the meantime, perhaps she could have a few extra Chinese lessons". (All my lessons at school were in English and I had an hour a day, the last hour, to learn Chinese as a special subject because Mamma requested this specially). The Head – a Miss Sawyer – drew herself up to her full height and bristled, "Miss Ho-tung, we do not profess to teach Chinese in this school. If you wish your sister to learn Chinese, you had better take her away to another school". Irene was so amazed at this that, after consulting Mamma, it was decided that I should leave this school and follow Irene up to Canton to start my studies in Lingnan University as an external student to catch up on my Chinese.

I must not go on before mentioning that in my last year at school I became a boarder again because Mamma and my older sisters went off to England – apart from Jean who was already married, only Grace was left to keep an eye on me. Mamma wondered whether she would be strict enough to discipline me if I should need it. But Grace was kind and would often visit me in school; occasionally K.C. would come with her, too. There would be tears from me each time we said good-bye. Grace was always generous and would bring some "goodies", which I shared with my friends.

CHAPTER 3

College Days

It was now the end of 1929 and I was about to begin a new phase of my life. I was to enter into a completely new world. With Irene, we took a river boat up the Pearl River to Canton and then in a small junk sailed across the final narrow strip of the river, which was a muddy yellow colour and fascinated me. The river boat docked at dawn – it was a comfortable night journey from Hong Kong. Irene and I arrived on the jetty of Lingnan University campus to be met by rickshaws, which took us to her quarters. These were on the top floor of one of the many University buildings. There was a lovely fresh country air about it – it smelt different from Hong Kong somehow. I was a little apprehensive about coming into an entirely Chinese community – the only Westerners were American missionary professors and lecturers in the University.

There was a great problem welling up within me. At school in Hong Kong, I was known to be Eurasian and not pure Chinese. But, my family, especially Irene (who was determinedly hanging on to the fact that she was pure Chinese and nothing else) told me to say I was pure Chinese too. This puzzled and confused me and I felt it was dishonest. I found it difficult to mix with the other students, all of whom were of pure Chinese origin and I was continually teased about my appearance. I had light brown hair and brown eyes, my skin was fairer, whereas Chinese people have black hair and black eyes.

Chinese people can be very snobbish about race and I was made to feel an outcast. I wept through most of the first term and would hardly ever leave my sister's flat (I had to stay with her instead of in the girls' hostel, which made me even more different). Lingnan was a disaster as far as I was concerned.

Another disadvantage was the fact that I spoke very little of, and hardly knew how to read and write the classical Chinese language. So I had to have a special tutor to help me cram it in. Instead of Chinese Classics, I was given a crash course on modern Chinese which was easier to learn. I have never worked so hard in my life and I managed to scrape through the entrance exam into the University. I have since forgotten all the Chinese I had learned, probably because it was crammed, while on the other hand, my sisters (some of them) are still Chinese scholars and can recite the Classics up to this day due to the fact that they learned it before they started school (in English) from our Chinese tutor. But, life had to go on. Besides cramming Chinese studies, I had to make up in subjects like biology, chemistry and physics, which were not taught in my school. I had also to brush up my algebra and geometry. I was above average in English, which made life easy in a Chinese University; the standard wasn't high. So for a year, I was an external student and gradually found my feet.

I found the American professors extremely kind. Three separate families invited me in turn for breakfast on Sunday mornings. When my sister left for America after a year or so, I moved down to the girls' hostel. Here I found most of the girls even more unkind, but fortunately I was to share a room with a very nice girl and we became really firm friends. She was athletic and together we took up running. We were both "Freshmen", or in the first year of college (now that I had passed my entrance exam). "Freshmen" were housed in the "cow barn" away from the main building! It was literally a cow barn and very primitive. The floor was made of large terracotta tiling and was always damp. Due to the intense humidity it was "sweaty" most of the time. So to prevent some of the damp rising up to our beds, we placed rush matting on the floor under them and spread some charcoal over it. Our shoes would literally go mouldy over-night. This was no exaggeration. There were only cold water taps, so when we needed hot water to wash in, we had actually to buy it. Coolies would carry the water over to us in large wooden buckets slung through a pole, which was balanced over the shoulder (as one sees in Pearl Buck films).

Life was gradually looking up. Three Chinese girls joined the College from Hawaii. They were more westernised and good crazy fun to be with. From then on, I began to enjoy life. We were all athletic and took up track seriously. We found a trainer: he was an agricultural student and a Senior. We trained regularly and became quite good, eventually representing the University in athletics and tennis, (I wasn't too bad), and went over to compete with Hong Kong University students, who were better!

Of course, with all these activities, I began to make friends and became quite popular with the boys as I was very much a tom-boy myself. I gradually saw more of my coach and we became very friendly and I started my first real romance. However, there was one more boy who seemed to like me very much, but he didn't have much chance as he was too shy. He has since become very successful and lives in San Francisco. Funnily, his surname is the same as K.C.'s.

On looking back, I am so relieved that my romance with my coach didn't come to much as he later fell in love with and married an American lady lecturer and was unfaithful to her, which ended up in divorce.

In the meantime, during the summer holidays, which I spent back home, I met another boy and we began a romance. He wrote to me regularly for a year. He was very intense and when I later married K.C., he was so upset he swore he would never marry anyone else – but he did!

Before I go on to another phase of my life, I must just stop to reminisce about the beautiful campus of Lingnan University, which was originally known as the Canton Christian College. It was founded by Americans, who were missionaries. The campus was beautiful. There were no cars in it, so was very quiet and leisurely. The wide paths were lined with eucalyptus trees, of which there were many varieties. The whole campus was well planned. There were many different buildings, none of them too large. They were beautifully built with upturned corners of Oriental roofs, and deep blue, or green, glazed tiles. There was a pagoda-like pavilion, which we called in Chinese "the eight-cornered pavilion", where students would meet over a cup of tea or coffee and a snack. It was a popular and happy place.

There were innumerable tennis courts, basketball courts, a swimming pool, facilities to ride, at which I only had one chance because being the tom-boy I was, I went out with a boy and started galloping in the country. Then the stirrup broke and I was left galloping hanging on to the horse's neck – quite like in the circus – until my friend managed to come alongside to control it. When Mamma heard of this, I was forbidden to ride again.

The countryside nearby, with its paddy fields and pine groves, was very romantic. Of course, the climate was harsher than in Hong Kong, being more continental. The summers were hotter and the winters colder. I often used to ride my bicycle (learnt to do that in my first lesson!) along the paddy fields to the pine groves; but I had to be very careful as there were only very narrow foot paths and if one wasn't careful one could fall right in and get a real muddy soaking. Often I would go for these rides with another boy friend. He was to be a *real* friend and companion and the relationship was completely platonic. We played tennis, ping-pong, went cycling and had fun together. They were happy memories. He has only recently died, having first of all won a scholarship into the Hong Kong University for engineering, getting married and raising a successful family. In later years, he was to help me to coach my children in maths as they missed out on four years of schooling during the war and had to catch up.

It was now 1932 and I was reaching the third year of College. I had decided to take up Agriculture. I forgot to mention the "Credit System" of the College in which one could work for as many or as few subjects as one liked, provided one acquired the required "credits" for the year. I began really to enjoy my studies and did very well indeed. Here, I was an individual, away from the shadow of my brilliant sisters. I was not expected to "live up to" any set standards and because of the understanding and encouragement of my teachers I began to blossom and gradually gained more confidence. I had masses of friends then and was always popular with the boys, whom I loved! My sister, Grace, says I'm a flirt – I suppose I am – I love to flirt – it's fun!

Throughout this time in Canton, I naturally made regular visits home. These homeward journeys were usually by train (there was a direct rail link between Canton and Kowloon, though for many years it was severed during the take-over by the Communists in South China). First of all, I took a tiny ferry boat, which ran a regular service from the Campus to the city of Canton, across the river, which separated the two. Canton itself was a very busy city. I didn't know it well because part of it was out of bounds for the young students. It was therefore only occasionally, and then with a few friends, that I ventured across to the city. After crossing over, I took a rickshaw to the station and boarded the train. During the short journey the scenery was mainly flat with rice fields. It was interesting to note the change of seasons. First of all, in the spring, there was the planting of the rice seedlings in the flooded fields (usually done by women). Every little bunch of rice seedlings had to be placed by hand into the wet muddy soil. Imagine having to bend over planting each lot of seedlings every twelve inches or so in rows about a foot apart right across each paddy field. The women usually wore the traditional "Hakka" woman's hat, which was wide brimmed, round and with a frill hanging down the brim to shade them from the sun. I often thought how strong their backs must have been.

The train raced through miles of these paddy fields and, as the season changed, it was quite exciting to watch the rice grow. The tiny seedlings gradually grew into fresh green fields (always in water), which changed into a different green as the summer wore on. When the breeze blew, the grass-like blades would wave about like ocean waves. In the autumn, the colour of the fields would change, turning into a lovely gold. Then harvest time would come and the same women would be bending over gathering the grain a bunch at a time with their sickles. It was a very slow process, but so interesting to watch as I peered through the window of the train. I really loved this journey, because being a person of the soil, anything that grew from it fascinated me. In good soil, there could be two, or even three, crops a year. It wasn't long before we arrived in Kowloon. I was met by various people from home. K.C. would sometimes take his turn and it would be a welcome sight. He would always have a sympathetic ear and listen patiently to all my chatter. He was my best friend and confidant.

CHAPTER 4

K.C. (Kok Cheang)

During one of the visits home in the summer of 1932, K.C. told me that he was leaving. He had been a guest in our home ever since he left my sister Jean's, with whom he had stayed until after her baby, Betty, was born. He had previously returned from England from his postgraduate courses in Public Health (Cambridge) and Tropical Medicine & Hygiene (London) obtaining his diplomas with distinction. He graduated M.B., B.S., in 1924 and obtained his M.D. in State Medicine in 1930.

K.C. had done so well in his postgraduate exams that he decided to specialise in Public Health. He was very idealistic and felt this was the best way to help his fellow men. The Deputy Director of Medical & Health Service in Hong Kong was also taking the same course and when this very young Chinese doctor (then 25) had beaten him, having come within the first three in his class, Dr Moore was very impressed and offered him a post in the Medical Department in Hong Kong as a Health Officer. K.C. then started his career in Hong Kong and left England, leaving Eva behind. He had gone to England to study, together with Eva and Irene. Mamma accompanied them on this trip in 1927. He started work at the end of 1928 in Hong Kong.

Mamma was keen to have him around (she loved her doctor friends as she was very interested in medicine and was, as I have said, a natural nurse). Also, K.C. was engaged to be married to Eva, one of my sisters, who was studying in London and Dublin for her higher degrees in medicine, midwifery, and gynaecology. She was such a brilliant scholar. I had always admired K.C.'s faithfulness to Eva. But, Eva had decided three years before that she had changed her mind about marrying K.C., which broke his heart. He had hoped for a long while that Eva would change her mind.

When K.C. told me the news of his intended departure, I was completely shattered and wept; I was losing my very best friend and support and source of security. What was I to do? Panic filled my heart – I could not understand his decision and begged him to stay on. K.C. was quite amazed at the depth of feeling I had for him. He began to see me in a different light – perhaps, his little girl had grown up? We had been friends since I was 12 and now I was in my seventeenth year. He began to fall in love with me that summer and I was in seventh heaven. My idol, my friend, my "father figure" had actually fallen in love with *me* – a rather worthless person! We had a blissful summer together. We swam, we danced, we went for drives, we watched beautiful sunsets on the quiet side of the island among the pine trees looking out to the sea. They were idyllic days. He had the days planned and I was completely spoilt and loved as I had never been loved before. I went around floating on air. Everything I looked at – a flower, a dew drop, rain, a sun rise – transported me into ecstasy!

Summer was over and it was time to return to Canton. It was a sad parting, but there was always the next visit to look forward to. Each trip back to Hong Kong was meticulously planned by K.C., who met me at the train station and, after the weekend, saw me off on the river boat at night. And, so the autumn and winter terms passed.

K.C. is the eldest son of a very large family and his father had retired very early, leaving him the responsibilities of educating all his younger brothers and sister, as was the custom in Chinese families. K.C.'s family lived in Malaysia. He was born in Penang. His

Engaged

grandfather emigrated from China (Fukien) to Malaya and there he started a pepper business and became very successful. Unfortunately, one of his sons (K.C.'s uncle) squandered away all the fortune and the family was left very poor. I can't imagine how my mother-in-law brought up all those children with so little. She had eighteen pregnancies, but only nine survived!

So, K.C. was left to support his brothers and sister through school, paying for all their school fees. When it was time for him to be married, there was nothing saved, even though he had had a decent job for about five years.

As I was saying, K.C. was so shattered at losing Eva that he turned to God for comfort and began his life-long search for Truth. It was soon after (three years) that I came on the scene. When I began to show interest in his religious books, he was very surprised and I think it was this that triggered his thoughts that, perhaps, he had found his life's companion!

For myself, I had felt this loneliness and longing in my heart for so long that I am told by some that God was already speaking to me to claim me as His own. Mind you, I'm not trying to preach, but I would like to testify how very much K.C. and I relied upon and received strength and comfort through our faith in Christ. We have had more than our share of difficult experiences and sufferings and no human strength alone could have borne them if it had not been through the grace of God.

To go back to our story. It was near Christmas 1932. K.C. was due for his long leave to England soon. We were seriously in love and he wanted to marry me. So, plucking up courage, he asked for an interview with Father. "Sir Robert", he said, taking a deep breath. "I'm in love with Florence and we wish to be engaged before I leave for England. She could finish her studies in Lingnan, get her degree (B.Sc. Agriculture) and, after that, when I return, we would like to be married." "Well," said Father, pulling at his beard and thinking hard, "You will be away for many months. I don't think it is a good idea to leave her for so long. (I often wonder whether he thought I would run off with a ne'er-do-well!). K.C. was a good catch, a professional. *And*, I'd be off his hands and all the responsibilities of educating me. He didn't quite trust my rebellious spark in spite of my strict upbringing. "Why don't you delay going for a month or two and marry her first. Then you could both go off on your honeymoon together!"

I have always teased K.C. that he never proposed to me! After the interview with Father, he came to me and said "We're going to get married before I leave for England and you'll be coming with me." I was completely taken by surprise and I suppose, being only 17, I wasn't completely prepared for marriage quite so soon. I was hoping to get my degree first and felt that, for the first time in my life, I would achieve something. But, God had other plans for me.

CHAPTER 5

My Marriage and Honeymoon

The date was set for March 24th, 1933. I felt a little apprehensive about all that was ahead of me. There were many preparations to be made, though I didn't have much of a hand in it. My eldest sister, Victoria, (we call her Vic), took charge. I was married in white. The wedding dress was made by a French dressmaker in Hong Kong. There were many fittings to be gone through. I didn't particularly enjoy those. The dress was made up in ivory satin with a high rolled neck and long sleeves. My bouquet consisted of Arum lilies and gypsophila (angels' breath). Then of course, we shopped for my "going away dress". I can't remember what it was like. The three-tier cake was ordered, and the Hong Kong Hotel was booked for the reception. Invitations were not sent out individually, but instead, an announcement was made in the papers in which all relatives and friends were invited. There were so many friends and relations in Hong Kong that it would have been difficult to send individual invitations, so to avoid any misunderstandings or omissions, my parents decided to do this. There were over five hundred guests; K.C.'s colleagues were also there among the guests. My parents didn't think we'd have as many friends as Grace, who was married three months earlier – so it was a surprise to them. They had ordered a smaller wedding cake, but there was enough for all. In proposing the toast, the Vice Chancellor of the Hong Kong University, Sir William Hornell, said that I had forsaken Agriculture for Husbandry!

Those who weren't close friends, were surprised when they heard the news that K.C. was marrying me. They thought he was still engaged to Eva. Some thought I had stolen him from her. Mamma, who wasn't told about the broken engagement, couldn't believe it and a cable had to be sent to Eva for confirmation! She replied, "No objections! My blessings!" And, relief, I'm sure, as this released her from the feeling that she might have hurt K.C.

Besides preparing for the wedding, I was also taken shopping for the clothes I would need for our honeymoon. I was still too young and inexperienced to be trusted to shop for myself. It was all a rush as I was continuing to go back to Lingnan for my final term there.

To be quite honest, I was a little sad to be leaving. For the first time in my life, I really felt I was enjoying life and gaining confidence, on my own. I felt a little anxious to be taking on the responsibilities of marriage and wondered what the future would hold. But then I felt I could trust K.C. to be good to me and take care of me – after all, he was my "father figure" and I felt the need to have the "gap" filled.

The day finally arrived and it dawned cold, drizzly and miserable. "It's a sign that you are 'dirty' to have rain on your wedding day," I was told. This was meant as a joke as it was an old Chinese saying, and I felt rather depressed about it. But, fortunately, as the day wore on, the sun began to shine and when we emerged from the Registry Office, everything was bright. We were not married in church as it would have been against Mamma's wish, she was such a staunch Buddhist. However, when we got to England, we had a very simple quiet ceremony in a little church in Cambridge, where our marriage was blessed. It was rather special to have this extra blessing from God.

We spent our first night at Repulse Bay Hotel to await the sailing of our ship, a P. & O. liner to Southampton. Repulse Bay Hotel was a very romantic place right near the lovely sandy beach. We had spent many happy days on that beach. There was no pollution in those days and the little "matsheds", which lined the bay, were romantically built in wood and bamboo, with palm leaves thatched together for roofs. It was never crowded and the sea was always clear. We used to have morning swims, or better still, moonlight swims and we would come out of the water completely covered with phosphorus, which made us shine in the dark. Or, we'd swim along the bay, making lovely streaks of silvery light as the phosphorus was disturbed. What fond memories and what a difference between the Repulse Bay of today, with its concrete huts, packed beaches and pollution, and the old leisurely Repulse Bay Hotel, usually festooned with climbers covered in blossom, to be replaced by high-rise flats and buildings everywhere around the Bay, I'm told. No wonder we have no wish to return to Hong Kong.

And so, K.C. and I began our life together on a long honeymoon around the world. As K.C. got his appointment into the Medical Department of Hong Kong from England, he was given the privileges of an expatriate, which included "long leave" every four years and, later, every three years, with a first class passage to and from England for himself and his family. But, of course, in K.C.'s case, he was only paid the salary of a "local" boy, which was very much less than that of an expatriate. This did not deter K.C. from seeing as much of the world as he could. We took the journey home via America, paying the slight difference in fare and "living on a shoestring".

In those days, one had to take a ship all the way to England. There were no jets to fly us there. It was a six-weeks' sea journey.

Our first break of journey was Malaya. Most of K.C.'s relatives lived in Singapore and Penang. His parents were in Penang, so it was decided to break the journey and spend a month in Malaya. Kok Hoe, one of K.C.'s brothers, met us in Singapore and together we ventured up the Malay peninsula in his old car to drive to Penang. It was quite a journey! The heat was intense, the sudden rains heavy. Kok Hoe's car could barely stand the strain. Its aged windscreen wipers gave up trying to work, so we had to resort to rubbing soap on the windscreen to keep it clear enough for the driver to see.

We drove through dense jungle. The heat was so great that we had one blow-out of a worn tyre and then another, so we were left stranded in the middle of the jungle! These roads were quite infrequently used and it was ages before someone passed on a motor bike. Kok Hoe got a lift with one of the blown tyres on his lap, riding pillion, to try to get it mended. So K.C. and I were left in this open car to wait for his return. It was a very long wait. It began to get dark and we became anxious, as, gradually, we heard the sounds of the wild animals around us. I wondered what it would be like to be eaten alive! Just as I thought Kok Hoe would never come, he turned up and quickly the tyre was put on, the spare tyre had already been put on the other wheel.

K.C.'s mother, Sau Kim (1933)

The car limped on and, that night, we found a primitive rest house in Malacca to start off again the next day. I have yet to ride in a car, which needed more frequent topping up of engine oil than petrol! It was a miracle it didn't fall apart before we arrived in Penang.

I looked forward to meeting K.C.'s parents with timidity. Daughters-in-law were expected to be submissive to their mothers-in-law, to pay their respects, perhaps, even to kow-tow and certainly to "present tea", which meant handing to her, respectfully, with both hands and a bow, a Chinese tea cup full of fragrant tea, complete with a lid and saucer. But, none of these ceremonies had to be gone through. I was greeted with a smile and a handshake – how relieved I was. K.C.'s mother was the gentlest and most loving soul and his father so liked me that he wrote an enthusiastic letter to Father thanking him for giving him "a beautiful angel", or words to that effect, to be his daughter-in-law. All this boosted my morale!

In a Chinese family, the eldest is the most respected, while the younger ones have always to show respect and submit to those who are older. So, having been all these years expected to show respect to my older sisters and brothers, it was quite a nice change to be K.C.'s wife and No. 1 sister-in-law and thought the world of. K.C.'s word was law and his wish was granted in every way.

Since K.C.'s parents were not very well off, he decided to give them a break. He rented a little bungalow by the sea and his parents and some of his younger brothers and sisters joined us for a happy time together. Life was very relaxed. K.C.'s mother prepared most of the meals, which she loved doing, cooking all K.C.'s favourite dishes. During the day, her favourite pastime would be to gather clams on the beach and we would have them for supper.

We bought bananas by the branch and I sampled various varieties. We simply hung the branch up and all were free to pick one whenever they wished. It was a lovely peaceful time.

We stayed a few days with K.C.'s parents and then moved up to a hotel on a little hill by the sea, which was much cooler. It was a honeymoon hotel in which each little cottage was separate – we entered into a living room and went down stairs into the bedroom. There were lovely views from this height, but still very hot, so I had to take many showers each day to cool down.

While we were in Penang, we visited several places. There was the Snake Temple, which I didn't enjoy very much because there were snakes everywhere. The place I enjoyed visiting was the Botanical Gardens. There I was fascinated by all the unusual tropical plants. Everything seemed so luxuriant. It was leisurely and cool as we strolled about. But, suddenly, the peace was shattered by a group of monkeys! They were free to roam about and followed us around for a while hoping for some fruit because some visitors came prepared to feed them with bananas. I was fascinated.

Soon, our visit to K.C.'s parents was near its end and we got ready to take the next ship passing through on its way to England.

We said our farewells on board as all the family wanted to come to see us off and look at the ship we were to travel on.

On our journey, we called into various ports; we sailed from Penang across the Indian Ocean to Colombo in Ceylon. We disembarked and were driven to see the sights. I remember well the lovely luxuriant vegetation and the beauty of the tropical flowers, especially the Frangi-Pangi, which was very fragrant. Then, we went up the west side of India and on to Aden. Here, the scene was quite different. The landscape was dry and arid and the people seemed strange to me.

All the way, we had calm seas. The moon shone at night and the days were spent playing deck games and swimming in the swimming pool. It was a real honeymoon. On and up to the Red Sea we sailed until we reached the Suez Canal, which fascinated me. We went so slowly and smoothly, we didn't seem to be moving at all, except for the people, date trees and camels, which we passed on either side of its banks. It was very exciting. We stopped at Port Said, but I didn't have very happy memories of the place because the people seemed aggressive and frightening. They would jostle and try to force their wares on us. We didn't stay long and the journey continued along the Mediterranean. We stopped in Malta, where I was fascinated by the catacombs and I could imagine the Christians of old hiding in the labyrinth of passages.

We docked in Marseilles for a bit, but I don't remember anything about it. We then sailed to Gibraltar, where we were taken to see the apes. I didn't go near them as I hadn't forgotten my brother's monkey!

We then started on our last bit of the journey – the dreaded Bay of Biscay, where everyone expected to be sea-sick as it was so notorious for its rough seas. But, no, it was as calm as a mill pond. We docked in Southampton and took the boat train, and very exciting it was. I was so looking forward to being in England. Somehow, even before I arrived I knew I would love it.

My sisters, Eva and Irene, who were both studying in London, met us at Paddington and gave us a warm welcome. I felt a little awkward at meeting Eva, but she was friendly and wished to hear all the news and gossip about Hong Kong. I'm afraid I must have disappointed her because I knew very few people. I could never remember their names and their affairs. I suppose I was so much younger than the rest of my sisters that I didn't mix with the same crowd. Irene, of course, who had always been a bit of a "mother figure" to me, was very pleased to see us and gave me a big hug.

Irene was a little changed, I felt, she couldn't stop talking. She had been over-working and it was during this period when we were in England that she had a breakdown and had to take a complete rest. She was attempting too many projects. She was taking her higher degrees, as well as starting up a club in Chinatown for the young people of mixed parentage. Also, Father, who was in London, had become very ill. We visited him in hospital too. Though the doctor said his condition was very grave, I could see from his eyes and the set of his jaw that Father was determined to live! And, so he recovered and we were free to go on our sight-seeing trips in England.

I was beginning to feel a little sick in the mornings. Soon, we realised I was pregnant and Dick was expected in December and I hoped we'd get home by then. I was only 17 and was very apprehensive about being a mother and hoped I would be adequate enough to cope.

K.C.'s thirst for travel at that time was insatiable. We took delivery of a little Humber 12, with a sunshine roof. It was a perfect car and did us very well indeed as it later proved.

We started to tour England. From London, we drove to Devon, Cornwall (to Land's End), Wales, Scotland (right up to John O'Groats), coming down again and, of course, took in the Lake District. We economised as much as we could because K.C. wanted to see *everything*. We stopped at B. & Bs. and we had bread, Marmite and cheese for lunch and a cheap meal somewhere in the evenings. My head was in a whirl. I felt all the places were mixed up together. The scenery was beautiful and I fell in love with England then. But, as to churches, cathedrals, buildings, I got them all mixed up. I was just unable to take it all in. My pregnancy didn't particularly help. What I really became expert at was packing and unpacking and getting our clothes washed and dried while we travelled. This was before we used detergents and drip-drys!

We met up with a young doctor friend from Hong Kong, Douglas Laing, and together we crossed the Channel with the car to the Continent. We travelled through France, Switzerland, climbing up all the famous mountain passes, in turn, in our little car, then Austria and Italy. It was a fantastic journey. Of course, travelling by car in those days was pleasant. The traffic was much more leisurely, no one was rushing around as madly as they do now and the roads were not so congested. If only we had done this much slower and had more time to stand and stare in each place and to savour the atmosphere. I would have enjoyed it more and remembered more about it, but I was still able to enjoy the beautiful scenery of each country.

Soon, it was time to go home. K.C. arranged to have the car shipped across the Atlantic with us, on the Empress of Britain I think. We had a very rough crossing and I felt very ill, fainting quite a few times. K.C. was a bad sailor, too. I think the crossing took five days. We were travelling tourist class and, being a big ship, we were right down in her "bowels" – it was dark and stuffy and the ship vibrated a lot.

We docked in Canada – Montreal – where we spent the night in a hotel, which was a Chateau. It was all very palatial, but it was to be the last grand place where we spent the night. We tightened our belts and found cheaper places after that.

As soon as the car was ready and we had gone through all the formalities, K.C. was itching to start off. We drove right across Canada and the States in forty days. The brave little Humber did it all without any complaints, except for a puncture. I got very fond of this car. It was given to us by Father as part of my dowry.

We left Montreal and travelled along the Hudson Valley to New York. The journey was interesting as we followed the river;

the scenery was lovely. When we arrived in New York on a Friday evening, we suddenly realised that it was August Bank Holiday weekend and we had run out of cash! We travelled with a letter of credit so we *had* to go to a bank to cash our money. What should we do? K.C. had a brain wave. "We'll book in at a posh hotel so that they won't ask us for a deposit. We could have our meals in our room so that they would put the cost on our bill. The restaurant is out as they will expect us to pay each time." So, we turned in the car, which was driven into the garage of the hotel.

It was unbearably hot. We were in the middle of a heat wave. We were stuck in a hot and stuffy hotel room, which was charging us the earth each day. The only thing I was grateful for was the ice water we could get from the tap. The waiters brought our meals up, but weren't too pleased when we didn't tip them! At last, it was Tuesday morning – we could go to the bank – but we hadn't money to get the car out of the garage. We really were literally penniless. So, we called a taxi. The driver was a character and chatted with us, "How long have you been in New York?" "Since Friday," we replied. "Have you been up the Empire State Building?" "No," we said. "Have you been through the Holland Tunnel?" "No," we replied sheepishly. And, so he went on. Exasperated, he said, "Well, what *have* you been doing all this time in New York?" We had to explain our position with embarassment. We had arrived at the bank – we had no money to pay the taxi driver, so we had to ask him to wait for us while we drew some cash from our letter of credit.

When we duly came out of the bank and got back into the taxi to take us back to the hotel, the driver felt we had become firm friends and decided to drive us *personally* on a conducted tour of New York! Of course, the Empire State Building was quite a novelty in the days of 1933. We went right up by lift to the very top and I must say I was quite thrilled to get a bird's eye view of the city. It was quite an experience for me, though I was not fond of heights.

At last, we could be on our way. No one comes to America without seeing the Niagara Falls. So, on we drove until we reached them. I was duly impressed, but, to be honest, I wasn't as thrilled as I thought I'd be. Some say they are more dramatic from the Canadian side. As far as I can remember, we *did* cross a bridge to have a look from the other side. Probably, I wasn't feeling terribly well, so the memory of that day has faded.

Gradually, we made our way to Chicago, the big bad city! That was the year of the World Fair. We stopped two or three days in a little place just outside the city and spent the time looking round the Fair. It was very busy and there was so much to see.

The morning we were due to leave Chicago, we had a nasty shock. When we got to the car, we realised that it had been broken into. We had left a lot of luggage in it as we were so used to honest Britain (in those good old days of 1933, when no one needed to lock their doors, or their car doors), so we had left our things in the car for the night. Two leather coats and a camera were our most valued possessions and also, of sentimental value, was a much used picnic basket. We reported the theft to the police, who took down our Hong Kong address. They had their suspicions, they said, of whom the thieves were. "Leave it to us, we'll deal with it." Of course, we never expected to see any of our things again and sadly went on our way. We didn't go far as we discovered our petrol had been siphoned out, too!

Incidentally, we were delighted to find soon after we returned home, (Hong Kong), a large parcel arrive for us from Chicago. Guess what! It was all the things which were stolen, including our picnic basket – Good old "bad" Chicago!

From Chicago, we drove on westward through the Prairie lands of Wyoming and South Dakota. The roads were killing. They were not only un-surfaced, but were so uneven they had a wash-board effect and as our little car drove across it, it bounced and shuddered. This didn't do me any good at all, as by then, I was really *quite* pregnant and was getting uncomfortably large! I later often teased my son, Dick, that he was determined to survive because I really don't know how *I* did!

The scenery was flat. There was hardly a tree to be seen, neither was there any habitation. Only stretches and stretches of wheat fields. I often wondered what would have happened if we had broken down. We were so young and inexperienced that we didn't bring any spare parts for the car. In those days, English cars were strange to the Americans. They were very interested in the sun-shine roof – still a novelty! They asked us how much we paid for this small car and when we told them, they laughed, "We could get a car twice that size for that price!" To them, big was beautiful.

And so we drove on. By nightfall, we were getting anxious. We had not found anywhere we could spend the night. Eventually, when it was quite dark, we drew up by a shack-like place. We went into a smoke filled room crowded with burly farm labourers. They looked rough and I felt nervous. They seemed to be leering at me. We asked for a room for the night. The bar tender said, "Of course, there's a bridal suite!" Everyone laughed.

We were shown a dark, dirty room, where the walls were lined with newspaper. We locked the door and looked at one another nervously. Soon, there was a knock on the door. K.C. asked "What is it?" "Have you got a match?" then a giggle. "No," said K.C. and we didn't answer any more calls. We propped a chair against the door. Needless to say, we had very little sleep that night.

We were relieved to be starting off as soon as there was light. We drove on and on. The scenery was so dull, it was hard to keep awake. It was then I really realised the vastness of the American continent.

As we drove on into the State of Dakota, the scenery was getting more interesting. When we came to a place called Sylvan Lake, we stopped for a couple of days. I remember so well the beauty of the place, perhaps because it was such a contrast to the flat prairies. The lake was the bluest blue I had ever seen. Everything looked so fresh and clean and the peace I found there was unbelievable. I remember a lady with silver hair. She was so kind and motherly to me that I basked in it. I suppose I felt the need and support of some motherly love. I was grateful for this short break.

We then went on to visit the vast cliff face in the Black Hills, where the gigantic faces of the American presidents were being carved. We could just make out the face of Washington. They hadn't started on the others yet. The men working on it seemed like flies crawling on the rock which was so vast.

We then entered Yellowstone Park. It was full of sulphur springs bubbling about and vapour rising here and there. We visited "Old Faithful", a geyser which spewed up hot sulphureous water over thirty feet high at regular intervals. We stood and watched for quite some time wondering at the mysteries of nature.

I remember taking a swim in the Hot Springs swimming pool nearby, which was filled with this same hot, steaming, suphureous water. It was an open air pool, but there was glass panelling round it. What amazed me was that it was snowing gently all the time and we didn't feel cold at all.

It seemed, without our realising it, that it was already late autumn as we drove along towards Canada and crossing the border into Calgary and then on to Banff and to the Rockies.

We realised that the season in the Rockies was drawing to a close and there were very few tourists about. We had this beautiful and awesome place practically to ourselves. The autumn colours were magnificent. I was thrilled with them as I had never seen such splendour. Hong Kong vegetation is mainly evergreen. We get our colours in the spring, which is very beautiful, too.

Unfortunately, with the coming of winter, the mountain roads became snowed up and it was dangerous driving. The car began skidding and sliding. We found it very difficult negotiating round corners and frightening, as it meant a deep drop of a few hundred feet. Of course, we were driving without skid chains!

Eventually, we came down into a narrow and deep valley and stayed the night in a little place called Deer Lodge. It was a nice place, but I was disappointed not to be able to spend a few nights in one of the log cabins, which looked so romantic. They were all closed for the season.

In the late afternoon, we took a little rowing boat and K.C. rowed it into the middle of Lake Louise. The water was glassy and very dark and reflected the beautiful snow capped mountain. I can't say I enjoyed that row because it frightened me. It seemed so eerie, especially when I thought about the great depth of water below. I have always had a fear of drowning. It seemed terribly cold water to be drowning in!

And so we drove on. On the way we stopped by another lake, Lake Kootenay. This was much more pleasant and happy . The owner of the little place in which we spent the night was a friendly person and took us on his little motor boat to go fishing for salmon. We sat and rocked about in his little boat and waited patiently while he fished. Then, suddenly, there was great excitement. He had caught a fish. He had to work hard to capture it and haul it up. It was a huge 17lb salmon! We were quite excited, having never gone fishing in our lives. (I was never allowed to fish as Mamma, being a Buddhist, never killed life and she was a very strict vegetarian). But, not being vegetarians, we enjoyed the salmon that evening.

Talking of coincidences in life and what a small world we live in reminds me of one of the stops we made in a very remote place in a tiny restaurant in Yo Ho Park. We were served by a young Chinese lad and we got talking. In the end, it was discovered that he was also a Lingnan student from Canton. Throughout life, I have never ceased to be amazed at how small the world really is.

We were now reaching the end of our journey across North America. We had arrived in Vancouver. I don't remember doing anything exciting. I think we were both tired and so rested for a few days. This, of course, did not prevent K.C. from arranging to cross over to Victoria, where we were met by a couple who were friends of friends of ours. They were very congenial and showed us round.

Unfortunately, this was marred by an incident, which embarassed our friends. They were eager to show us the grand new swimming pool, which had just been opened in their town. They went to the booking office to buy our entrance tickets. They were asked, "Two tickets, sir?" "No," our friend replied, "Four." The ticket officer looked at us and said, "No Chinese accepted." Our poor friends turned scarlet with embarassment and indignation and told the man he could keep his tickets! They apologised profusely to us, but we assured them it was alright. We had come across snobbery and racism often and had learned to take it all in our stride.

Soon, it was time to board our liner, one of the lovely Canadian Pacific ships to cross the Pacific Ocean. When we boarded her, we actually saw our dear Humber being lifted by a crane into the bowels of the ship. It was a lovely sight.

Once more, we were on the high seas. The Pacific was true to its name and we sailed in perfect weather and silky calm seas. It was lovely for me just to be able to stay quiet and enjoy being spoiled by the wonderful service onboard ship.

We broke journey in Honolulu. We were met by another couple, who were friends of friends. They were American Chinese and were a lovely Christian couple. K.F. was secretary to the Y.M.C.A. We got on so well, and, to this day, I still exchange letters at Christmas with Florence. She was widowed many years ago.

We were tired. K.C. was content to stay put. K.F. and Florence had booked us into a lovely quiet hotel by the sea on one side of the famous Waikiki Beach. The hotel consisted of little chalets each with a bed-sitting room and a shower. It was palatial to us and seemed like our first little home. The grounds were beautifully planted with lovely fragrant shrubs and trees. There was the ginger lily, a pure white flower with exquisite scent which reminded me of home.

Every day, morning and afternoon, we strolled down the garden and swam in the sea. This could go on for ever, I thought. Of course, I was in my last stage of pregnancy – I think it was November. I was feeling very fit, but rather ungainly. We did very little sight-seeing, which suited me! I felt happy to enjoy this paradise island Oahu. The pace was slow, the people friendly, the ukulele was haunting and, above all, it was not crowded, as it is now. We had the best days of our lives.

After four weeks in Hawaii, we sailed on to Japan, where we docked in Yokohama. We just took a taxi for a couple of hours and were shown a few sights. I have very few memories of that day, except for the kindness and consideration of the taxi driver. I was so evidently pregnant that before we started off, he got out of his taxi and let the tyres down a bit so that I wouldn't feel the bumps!

From Yokohama, we sailed straight home and arrived two weeks before Dick was born! We were met by some members of the family, including my brother-in-law, M.K., who I'm afraid was rather shocked at the size of me! I could feel that, even though he said nothing. When we got home and saw Mamma, she said to me, "Why didn't you wait till the last day before coming home?" She meant that we were cutting things rather fine as Dick was due so soon. She had prepared a layette for the baby, the same as for Grace, as she too, was expecting a baby. They didn't think I was capable of doing anything for myself and were very surprised that I had got all the essentials ready, i.e. nappies, shawl, little vests and nighties and matinee jackets, all of which I had knitted and made myself during the journey. I was knitting matinee jackets and bootees and bonnets all the way across the American continent and also while driving around in England and Europe. I had bought the nappies in Treasure Cot in London! The family *were* surprised. The scatter-brained Florence was growing up. I was then 18.

CHAPTER 6

The Children and My First Home

Grace and I were both to go to the same hospital near "The Falls". Mamma wanted us to stay with her so that it would be easier for her to keep an eye on us and visit us in hospital. Grace and I thought we would be there together, but this was not to be.

Dick arrived on the 20th December 1933, early in the morning and Grace's baby, Shirley, didn't come until the 8th January. By then, I was out of hospital. Dick was a ten-pounder and was so enormous, with a thick black tuft of hair, that he looked like a month-old baby. I felt a little shy and awkward at becoming a mother. I suppose I was so young. We stayed with Mamma a little longer, probably a month, while our first home in Kowloon, which was on the mainland across the harbour from Hong Kong island, was prepared. Our furniture was hand made locally and mainly of solid wood, to our specific requirements: part of my dowry.

Dick in 1934

The house was only rented and the Government subsidised part of the rent. It was the best we could afford and I thought it was a palace – a real home of our own! It was a semi-detached house, with a reasonably sized garden. We were on a fairly main road, which didn't worry us as in those days there wasn't too much traffic. Steps led up to the main hall, which wasn't very large. This led on to the dining room, which faced north with a verandah at the front of the house, and a living room with a little verandah also which faced south. There was a tiny study joined on to the dining room. Stairs led up from the dining room to a little room which faced south at the back of the house and then on to two bedrooms, each with attached bathrooms. A separate toilet was near the little room. The servants' quarters were down on the ground floor, which led to the garden. They had their separate kitchen and bathroom. There were four small rooms altogether for them.

Domestic staff was easy to find and the pay was well within the means of most middle-class families. Food was always provided by us.

I was a little nervous to be starting on my new life as mistress of this household. I was not used to giving orders and making decisions about meals and the general running of the home. But, slowly, I learned and I think I can say we made a happy, well run and welcoming home.

We were to live happily in this house until the outbreak of World War II in Hong Kong in December, 1941, when the Japanese occupied Hong Kong.

Dick was an easy baby to handle because he was never too fragile, so I quickly learned to bathe him. He was no trouble at all. Soon, Daphne, our second child was on the way. I don't think my pregnancy was so carefree. The summers were hot, humid and stuffy in Kowloon. I was more used to the lovely cool pure air of the Peak, where I grew up. Daphne was born in July and I think when one is pregnant one feels the heat more.

Since K.C. was a Government servant, I could have my baby delivered in a Government hospital free. We had to pay for Dick's delivery as it was in a private hospital with a private G.P. and we didn't like the doctor then, who neglected me. Well, with Daphne, it was worse. They say it always happens to doctors' families.

Being a second child, K.C. took me to hospital as soon as labour pains started. I got there at twelve midnight and she was

Daphne in 1935

born by 12.30am. It was a very busy night. There was only one sister and one amah on duty. They had to dash up and down the stairs as the charity wards downstairs were full and the babies were arriving one after another! I was left in the labour room on my own until labour had started and the baby's head was already protruding. What a frightening time it was for me. Luckily, it was my second baby and I knew what to expect! Daphne was born on 4th July, 1935, just before my twentieth birthday.

Poor Daphne, I couldn't breast feed her at all as I had developed a breast abscess. The pain was excrutiating and I ran a temperature. Nobody could agree how to treat me. Each nurse who came on duty changed the treatment and I was completely messed about. The doctor was negligent and wasn't even present at the birth. In the end, K.C. was so disgusted, he discharged me himself. I was soon well when I got home. K.C. knew exactly what to do.

It was not easy to bottle feed a baby in the tropics as one had to be so careful about infection. Milk always had to be refrigerated, otherwise it would go sour. I was given a formula which I had to mix up daily. Due to the use of cow's milk, Daphne nearly died of bacillary dysentry. It was infected by a carrier working in the dairy. A number of our neighbours' children were similarly infected and I'm afraid some of them didn't survive. We were lucky, but it left Daphne very weak for a long time.

Our life during this period was happy and comparatively carefree. K.C.'s work was varied and interesting. He was then Health Officer of the New Territories, which was leased land from China to Britain. At that time, the New Territories was not built up as it is today. It was an interesting drive around the territories, passing paddy fields, tall hills, green valleys and little Chinese villages and along the coast line for about sixty miles. We often went together in the car with the children and a picnic basket.

While K.C. did his rounds of the villages and clinics and saw to the health and hygiene of this vast and varied area, he would drop us either at our little beach shed by the sea, where I would spend the day with Dick and Daphne and, later, with Wendy as well. Dick was swimming before he was walking. It is usually so mild and sunny that we could swim even on Christmas Day. It was the best time of the year from the weather point of view.

In the afternoon, K.C. would come to join us and have a swim himself. It was a welcome refreshment for him in the summer months, when it was hot and sticky.

On some trips around the New Territories we would be dropped by K.C. at my Mother's farm, which was near the village of Sheung Shui. I loved this place. We always had fun here, even when I was a child. There were lawns, shady trees, a lotus lily pond, where we could pick and eat lotus seeds raw straight from the fascinating seed pods shaped like the rose of a watering can. There were the lichee groves and when the fruit was in season the red and succulent lichees would weigh the branches down. Silk worms were bred here and there were fields of mulberry trees. These would be kept low for easy harvesting of the leaves, which are the staple food of silkworms. From the egg to the cocoon and, later, the moth, I would watch these silkworms grow. The mulberry leaves were chopped very fine to start with until whole leaves were fed according to the size of the silkworm. When we went into the room where they were feeding, we could hear a "hissing" noise. I could write a book on silkworms; they fascinated me and often I would keep a few as a child and bring them to school to show my friends. I was hoping to take Sericulture in Lingnan University, but it was taught in Chinese and my Chinese wasn't good enough to be taking a specialised subject like that.

I remember that my parents came to London for the Wembley Exhibition in 1924 with a retinue of Chinese amahs to exhibit silk production – silkworms to silk stockings! A report of the exhibition appeared in "The Times".

To come back to our picnics in the farm, here we waited for K.C., who sometimes would join us for lunch. We basked in the sun in the winter, or just lazed under the trees in the summer. The children loved it as they were free to run about as far as they liked. There was also a mini putting green and we played about with our golf balls and putters. What happy, happy memories!

Later, when the children grew older and during the school holidays, they were allowed to take turns to go with K.C. on his rounds. This was a special privilege!

On 25th February, 1937, Wendy, our youngest, was born. Wendy had royal treatment. I had been very unwell after Daphne's birth, having been quite ill with a breast abscess and then 'flu. I lay listlessly in bed for days not wanting my food and losing all interest in life. Fortunately, the mother of one of my amahs was visiting. She was a very patient and caring person and she sat by me and fed me a spoonful at a time, encouraging me to take "just another spoonful". I gradually regained my strength and my interest in life, but was never really myself before I found I was pregnant yet again soon afterwards.

Mamma was worried about me and insisted we should consult the best doctor there was. He was the Professor of Gynaecology and Obstetrics in the Hong Kong University. He was kindness itself. He discovered I had a retroversion of the uterus, which accounted for the dragging sensation I had had all these months. Professor Nixon put this right at once and I never looked back. I began to feel really well again and the rest of my pregnancy was plain sailing.

Wendy was born in February in Victoria Hospital in the "mid levels" of Hong Kong. It was a lovely little hospital and when I arrived that night I was greeted by a fire in my room! The days were cold and damp at this time of the year, which we called "Chinese New Year weather".

During Wendy's birth, she was privileged to have to welcome her the best doctor in town, her grandmother and her father – quite a welcoming party I always said. Everything went smoothly. Professor Nixon stayed with me for nearly an hour afterwards to see that everything was all right.

Mamma insisted I went home with her after hospital, so that she could keep a strict eye on me and see that I had a proper rest for a month. I was completely spoilt. I was relaxed and able to breast feed Wendy – altogether for nine months. It was a happy time and Wendy blossomed out into a healthy and very happy baby. She played for ages by herself and was always full of smiles and dimples.

Wendy in 1952

CHAPTER 7

My Second Holiday with K.C.

At Christmas that year, when Wendy was ten months old, K.C. was due for long leave again. Mamma was very emphatic that I was not to take three small children with me on this trip. Dick was four and Daphne two-and-a-half. "You can't manage with a baby, as well. It will be too much to drag them around trailing all over the world. Two of them will be more than enough. Wendy will stay with me in the nice cool and quiet atmosphere of the Peak. I shall care for her and the two amahs will take care of the chores," she said. So, what could I do? I was torn apart at having to leave my lovely baby and, yet, I felt it would be very harming for her to be tripping about the world living out of suitcases, not having regular schedules and not eating the regular meals a baby should be having. Also, Wendy was still in the nappy stage and there were no disposable nappies in those days. Daphne was passing through a difficult stage as she had not quite recovered from her serious illness of bacillary dysentry and could not let me out of her sight. She would hang on to my skirt and was tearful most of the time. Mamma worried about this and said to her, "Now, you leave your mother in peace and let her have a good holiday!" Mamma and I were very close then and I knew she felt very much for me. That was why I could safely leave Wendy in her care and I felt, at nine months, she would be happier with a regular routine.

So, on Christmas Day, we sailed for England. We broke journey once again in Singapore, where we stayed for a month and visited K.C.'s family. This was to be shattered one evening with a telegram, "Mamma passed away on 5th January. Letter follows". I could not believe this. It was so sudden. Mamma was in good health when we left her. And what of Wendy? I hardly slept that night. We were packed together in one large four poster bed – K.C. and I and the two children – as K.C.'s whole family was with us in the holiday bungalow.

Next morning, Daphne (aged two-and-a-half) sat bolt upright and said "Where's Paw Paw?" (Paw Paw is the Chinese for maternal grandmother). I said, "She's not here." "But, she is" Daphne insisted. "She came and kissed me here," pointing to her cheek. I was amazed. The children had both been asleep when we received the sad news. How could Daphne have known? I knew that Mamma was worried about her when we left home, so the only explanation I could give to myself was that Mamma's spirit must have come to bless her granddaughter. She appeared that same night to two other persons.

Irene wrote to tell us what had happened. They had sent us a telegram first to say Mamma was ill. We didn't receive it until after the second one. Mamma was ill with a very bad cold, but carried on regardless, as she usually did, visiting the sick in hospital, where wounded Chinese soldiers lay, (I think there had been casualties from the usual civil war in South China and some of them had come into Hong Kong). She was so upset at the sight of them – half starved and in rags and shod only in cloth sandals and were so very ill that she became really ill herself and pneumonia set in. She had had diabetes for some years and this didn't help. There was just nothing one could do. There were no such things as antibiotics at that time.

Irene went on to say that Wendy was fine and for us not to worry about her. She, Irene, would be remaining at The Falls and would look after her. There would also be the two amahs and Mrs Archer, an English nanny, who was living there with her two charges, children of some Chinese diplomatic friends of my parents. Irene said there was no point in our returning as we were well on our way. We took her advice and continued sadly on our journey.

This time, as we came to Ceylon, we went to Colombo and were driven up to Kandy, the hill resort. We passed many tea plantations and eventually arrived on the top of the hill and enjoyed the lovely cool pure air and the beautiful view below us.

On the way, I saw with delight elephants bathing themselves in the stream. I love elephants.

After Ceylon, we stopped in Bombay. To me, it didn't seem a pleasant city at all. It was over-crowded, the people seemed to be dirty, in rags and very pathetic. I was shocked at the number of homeless people who spent the night lying in the streets. (Of course, in Hong Kong there *were* street sleepers, but it was not until later that we had the problem of overcrowding).

We were taken to see the Parsee burial ground, where the dead were left out for the vultures. It was a horrible sight to see the vultures hovering about and perching on branches ready to pounce on the corpses. These birds were so much on my mind that I made a mistake (for which I was teased all my life by the children!) in the Tower of London when I saw the ravens and excitedly shouted, "Look, vultures!"

From Bombay, we took the usual route to Aden and through the Red Sea. At Suez, we decided to go overland to Port Said to join our ship. This entailed going by car across the desert to Cairo. The desert was fascinating. I was very glad we didn't have a sand storm, which we had experienced during our first trip. Sand blew into everything. It choked us. It came through closed doors and windows. We had it up our nostrils and in our hair. We had it in our food and in our drink. It was not a pleasant experience!

We continued across the desert until we came to Cairo, where we stayed the night in a hotel on the outskirts. Next day, we visited the interesting museums and saw the mummies, which fascinated me.

We went on to visit the pyramids whose great structures dwarfed me and made me feel really small. I gazed in wonder at Man's achievement. We also marvelled at the Sphinx. We were led through the insides of the pyramids, crawling up steep, narrow, long, low passages, which gave me claustrophobia. These led into various burial chambers and I imagined how kings and queens were buried here with all their wealth and splendour. I was glad to be out in the sunlight again.

We took the usual camel ride, which I didn't enjoy as I was frightened at swaying about at this great height! Happily, it wasn't for long.

Soon, we arrived back in Port Said, where we joined our ship and sailed on through the Mediterranean again. The sea didn't seem so calm, but I didn't have much time to stand and stare as I had two children to care for this time. They had to be dressed and bathed and fed. Clothes had to be washed and ironed – no detergents, nor drip-dries, even then. Daphne was a problem and I spent hours in the ship's dining room persuading her to eat. Children's meal times were different from adults – so I was in and out of the dining room – it seemed – forever!

The children were happy on the ship but, unfortunately, Dick was very seriously ill when we first left Hong Kong. He had caught malaria the last evening when we visited Grace, who was rather ill with malaria. She was living out in Tytam, a lovely spot on the island near the sea. There was malaria in that area and the anopheles mosquito (which carried the parasite) bred in the mountain streams, and came out at dusk to transmit the disease. We stayed later with Grace than we should have done, and Dick was playing out of doors. When he developed a temperature on the ship, we didn't realise it was malaria. The ship's doctor said, "It's only a dirty tummy," and Dick was given a laxative! His temperature soared to 105°F. and K.C. was getting worried. Dick was delirious.

Luckily, on the way to the ship on the morning we sailed, K.C. said, "Let us just stop by the chemist and get some antebrin" – the drug which was used for malaria at the time – "We were in Tytam last night and we might have been bitten by the mosquitoes." All through our lives, we felt we had this "guidance", especially K.C. This saved Dick's life. Of course, he turned a bright yellow from the drug and was so weak he could hardly stand. It was malignant malaria he had developed. So much for "a dirty tummy".

But, with the sea voyage, Dick regained his health. We arrived in Marseilles and took the train overland to Calais and across the Channel to Dover and by boat train, once again, to London.

During this period in England, we toured around in much the same way, but because it was during the winter months we didn't do so much mileage. Instead, we crossed over the Continent and spent some weeks in Davos, Switzerland.

K.C. and I started ski lessons and just as I learned to keep upright and was taking my first haltering runs down the nursery slopes, I went down with 'flu! I was quite ill, so the doctor was called. He gave me an injection, but, unfortunately, it hit a nerve in my buttocks, which left me in agony and I could only hobble about, so *that* was the end of my skiing lessons.

K.C. managed to go on. He had a private instructor and became so good that he was taken for long mountain trips all day. Unfortunately, he caught my 'flu later and the same doctor was called. He gave K.C. an intravenous injection of quinine, which nearly killed him. As the injection was being given, K.C. knew he was collapsing and managed to get the doctor to withdraw the needle. A nurse had to be called and there was real panic as glucose was pumped into him. His face turned a deep grey, which frightened me.

This left us both rather weak but the children were both very active! I used to dress them in their lovely ski suits (I can still see them now!) and pushed them out into the sunshine and snow. Passers-by were intrigued by these two attractive Chinese children with their jet back hair and rosy cheeks, and they fed them with chocolates! We put Dick on his first pair of skis. From then on, he has not looked back and now, at 55, he is compelled to go skiing two or three times a year!

While we were in Switzerland, we got in touch with a Swiss friend, Bruno Muller, whom we had met in London during our honeymoon when we stayed in our first boarding house ,which was quite an experience. Actually, we bumped into him again when we were in Switzerland a couple of months later. We drove past him in the streets of Zurich. Well, this time Bruno invited us to his home to meet his parents and his fiancée, Elizabeth.

They became very firm friends of ours and each time we came to Europe, somehow they would make a great effort to meet up with us. They contacted the Red Cross for news of us after the war. Bruno and Elizabeth were very taken with our children and I remember very well their seeing us off to the train during Easter, laden with two enormous chocolate Easter bunnies for them!

All the way, as we made our way back towards the Channel, the children nibbled into their bunnies and the inevitable happened. They were both very sick! I spent ages trying to clean the mess off their lovely ski suits. I shall never forget the incident.

And, so we were back in England. We stayed with our Methodist friends for a while. Rutland and Alys were a homely couple. They had two daughters who were of similar ages as our two. I had first met the Showells in Lingnan. He was my trigonometry teacher and she was my "big sister". (Each woman member of staff adopted a "little sister" from the girl students). Rutland was a great tease and always said he was never successful in instilling any "Trig" into me. I was hopeless at figures. Alys was very motherly. I was always invited for afternoon tea on Sundays. I loved her teas with thin slices of bread and butter and home made scones and jam and sponge cake – a real English tea!

In my student days, I dropped in to see Alys whenever I could and told her all my problems. She was also the first to know when I became engaged to K.C. All these years, we have been in touch. Rutland died some time ago and now Alys is 85, but still very active indeed, travelling to and from Australia to see one of her daughters, Mae Lyn. We don't see each other now as we can't travel far in our car and neither can she.

Soon, it was time to cross the Atlantic again. It seemed a smoother crossing and more pleasant. K.C. arranged that we cross Canada by train this time, but still with our picnic basket! The children loved the train ride. Dick, a typical boy, was very excited about the huge engine and the enormous wheels, taller than K.C. It is such a pity that we lost all the snaps we took on our journeys during the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong.

We had a compact little compartment in the train, with wash room and a little loo! Dick tried to be very helpful and "washed up" our picnic cups and plates after we took our picnic meals (much cheaper than food on the train!).

We didn't stop at many places this time as we had to go straight on to Vancouver to make our journey home across the Pacific once more. We broke journey in Honolulu once again and shared K.F. and Florence's home and hospitality and our children and their boys had some lovely times together. It was a relaxed and carefree time, which would never happen again. The children ran about bare-footed. We swam, we went for drives, we lazed about in the garden, we laughed and we sang! We were so happy together, I shall never forget those days. We were lucky to have them visit us in Hong Kong about two years later, but this was the last time we saw K.F., who died not long after his Hong Kong visit.

CHAPTER 8

The Children Starting School

Our idyllic time in Honolulu came to an end and we had to start off on our last lap home. We arrived in September in time for Dick's first term at school. Of course, he went to nursery school for one or two terms when he was three-and-a-half! He was so bright and intelligent that I felt he needed some channelling and guidance for his active mind. Since this little nursery school was just over the road and a very good friend of ours, "Miss Wong", taught in it, Dick was admitted. He loved it and loved Miss Wong, whom he already knew.

I always like to tell the story about him, which showed how precocious he was. There was to be a parents' day and he knew I was coming. I was then pregnant with Wendy and rather large. We were not very well off then, in fact, I was "making do" with only two maternity dresses, which I had had since Dick's time. One of the dresses was rather the worse for wear. Dick came to me and said, "Mummy, when you come to my school tomorrow, please don't wear the dress with the hole in it!". I was amazed. What can be going through his mind and what a thing to observe from a little boy of three-and-a-half! I firmly reassured him, "I shall be wearing the nicer dress". Another incident, which showed how observant he was, was when he was taken for a hair cut by a new amah, who didn't know the way home. Dick, in her arms, directed her back with signs. He had not begun to talk yet! He was very slow in speech.

As soon as Dick was old enough, we had to think seriously about schooling. I felt I had missed out so much in not having a good Chinese education, that my children must have a good foundation of the language. So, we enrolled Dick in a Chinese school nearby which was run by a very good and understanding headmistress. This changed Dick's life.

Being very bright, he was very mischievous. He loved teasing his sisters, especially Daphne, who gave him the right reaction by screaming for "Mummy". He had a very enquiring mind and that meant things *had* to be taken apart, especially mechanical things like clocks and watches! It was a full time job to keep him occupied and out of mischief. Sometimes, I despaired, but "Yip Sin Sang", the Headmistress, found him a welcome challenge and managed to channel all his energy and brain to more useful ends. He changed almost over night and became a keen student and very proficient in Mandarin. I was very proud of his progress as he was achieving something I had always wanted to be: a success at school.

Daphne soon joined the school and seemed happy enough there. Little Wendy went to "Miss Wong's" school and became her shadow. She loved her "Miss Wong", and often preferred to be with her than being at home. In fact, on the 8th December, 1941, the morning of the bombing by the Japanese planes, she was already at Miss Wong's waiting to walk to school with her. The other two had already started off.

CHAPTER 9

The War Years

The first bombing was aimed at Kai Tak Airport, just about two miles from where we lived. All the planes were destroyed in that one raid. Hong Kong was taken by surprise.

Of course, there was the usual preparation and talk of war and the probable invasion by the Japanese. They were expected to attack us by sea. But, all went wrong because they came overland, across the New Territories and then over the range of hills called Lion Rock into Kowloon.

Most of the expatriate women and children had been evacuated to Australia some time before and the people who were left to carry on the running of the colony were lulled into a sense of false security. Somehow, I felt in my bones that war was imminent and I made my own preparations, gradually storing up enough food to feed us and the servants for a few weeks. I even went so far as to begin taping the windows against the blasts from bombing. I joined the Auxiliary Nursing Service and learned to be an Air Raid Warden.

K.C., of course, being in charge of the health of Kowloon and the New Territories, was the first to get the message very early that morning. He was also involved in the arrangements for casualties in Kowloon; Kowloon Hospital was made the Medical Headquarters and Casualty Hospital. He had to drive off immediately to the New Territories to evacuate the refugees (there were about five thousand of them in all the refugee camps, who had drifted over the border when the Japanese invaded China). We said a hurried good-bye. I was rather apprehensive as to what would happen to him, but, I had little time to worry. Wendy was already at Miss Wong's. The two others were walking to their school with an amah. The bombs rained down (some people thought it was practice, they could not believe it was the real thing!)

The two children, Dick and Daphne, were sent home immediately when they arrived at school and, soon after, Miss Wong arrived, as white as a sheet, bringing Wendy with her. I kept the children quiet after Jessie (Miss Wong) left. I was determined that they should not feel any apprehension.

By the end of the day, K.C. returned home. I was so grateful to see him. He told me things were really serious. All bridges in the New Territories were being blown up by the British Army to slow down the advance (they now realised from which direction we were going to be attacked). Somehow, miraculously, K.C. managed to cross each bridge just before it was blown up.

Soon, he had his orders from the Head of Medical & Health Services (Dr. Selwyn-Clarke – later knighted). The children and I had to be evacuated over to the island of Hong Kong, where the last stand was to be made. Selwyn did not want K.C. to worry about us so that he would have his full attention on his work. I was a bit stunned. I had made all preparations to stay at home. This was to be the first time we were to be parted in the eight years we were married. So, I hurriedly packed a haversack, which I placed on my back, and two light canvas bags of essential warm clothing for the children were also hurriedly filled. It was getting chilly. The children were each allowed to take one favourite toy with them and all chose a cuddly one!

We were dropped off at the Kowloon Star Ferry Wharf to cross the harbour. We said our farewell to K.C., not knowing when we'd meet again. We then were shepherded on to the ferry. The crossing was worrying as the Japanese planes were hovering overhead. They were bombing Stonecutters Island, which had military installations and which was situated in the harbour.

The children and I were billeted by the Government in a semi-detached house up the Peak. It so happened that my sister, Irene, was also there with her six months old baby (Junie) and her amah, and my brother, Eddie, with four children (trapped in Hong Kong while on a visit from Shanghai to celebrate Father's diamond wedding anniversary.) Also in our group was Mrs Archer (the English nanny and her two wards, who were very young). So, all in all, there were ten children ranging from six months to thirteen years. I don't remember how we slept, I think it was mainly on mattresses on the floor.

K.C. phoned me in the evening to see how we were. Very soon we got the news of the sinking of the British battleships, "Repulse" and "Renown". When I told K.C., he would not believe me, "It couldn't be," he said, "they are unsinkable!" He was a very loyal British subject.

It was only for a very few nights that I had contact with K.C. Soon, the telephone wires were cut. Kowloon had been invaded and occupied in about three days! The bombing and shelling of Hong Kong island continued. One afternoon, my brother went out with his secretary to try to get some rations for us. During this time there was an air raid. Instinctively, as we all huddled with the children in the little basement, I had a dreadful premonition that Eddie had been hurt. "It's your imagination," said Irene. But, in the evening, when he didn't return, Irene phoned up the various First Aid posts and hospitals for news of him. "Yes," they said from the Naval Hospital, "your brother was taken in with his secretary and they are both badly hurt." The secretary died that night. Her legs had been blown off. My brother suffered the same injuries, losing both legs, but survived. He took things so well that I never once heard him complain and when he left hospital he used to hobble about on his knees – a pitiful sight – as he had been over six feet tall. In the years after the war, he was able to lead a very normal life – driving a car, swimming and even dancing!

With Eddie in hospital, his four children were left with Irene and me. They were very active children, especially the eldest, Eric. He would disappear during an air raid and we would frantically call for him to come in. He was busy outside picking up hot shrapnel! What a time we had with a great responsibility.

Soon after this, during one of the air raids, a bomb landed on the other side of the semi-detached house we were billeted in. We were all huddled together in the cellar. We watched the little basement window being sucked outwards and there was the crash and bang of falling debris. As soon as the "all clear" siren was sounded, we went out to have a look at the damage. All the windows were blown out and splintered glass lay everywhere. We decided it was impossible to spend the night there, so we packed what little belongings we had and applied for transport down into the town. We were hoping we would be allowed to stay in my Father's town house. The truck that was promised us, did not turn up. We waited and waited, pressed against the hillside, while the Japanese planes above hovered and dived down with their machine guns rattling. We were sheltering near the little Peak Church, which was later demolished by bombs. Each of us adults said a prayer; one to the Goddess Mercy, one to Mamma, one to God and Jesus Christ, while another was saying "Hail Mary!" There were five adults and ten children altogether – still waiting for transport.

After what seemed an eternity, a large car drove by. Irene and I recognised the driver (he was the Professor of Physics in Lingnan University). We both shouted and waved, but our hopes were dashed as he drove on past. He didn't seem to recognise us. Just as our hopes sank to the very depths, we noticed a car drawing up from the opposite direction. Dr Knipp had turned his car round and come to the rescue! You would not believe this, but *all* of us piled into this car. Of course, the children were tiny, but, even so, it was fifteen bodies! We were *so* grateful because we had thought that we would be spending the night out in the open. Unfortunately, the children had lost their only toys. Dr Knipp drove us from the peak right down to the lower levels, where Father had his large town house. It seemed quite full with various relatives already so we camped down in the large basement. We were given mattresses, which were placed on the floor. The children slept with me in one double mattress. Eventually, there were forty of us sheltering and sleeping in the basement. There was only one toilet and a basin.

The shelling from Kowloon across the harbour became more and more intense. The air raids were more frequent. I found the shelling more terrifying as the shells screamed over us and we held our breaths as we waited for them to explode. On top of all this, the children developed chicken pox! I don't even know to this day how we managed.

When the shelling and bombing got too severe, Mrs Archer and I would take the smaller children to a little "hidey-hole," which was safer – it was a sort of ledge behind the main basement and so we had an extra wall to protect us from any shrapnel which might fly through the basement shutters as these faced the harbour. It was very dark in this little tunnel and we had to bend down to get in. We lit a tiny oil wick lamp, which gave comfort, especially to the children. Mrs Archer led us in a little hymn when our spirits flagged and the children were weepy – "Jesus bids us shine with a clear bright light." I always think of these times when I hear the tune.

Not many days after we arrived at Father's town house, called "Idlewild"; the Japanese had bombed the water supply and we were left without water. (It was said that this was what hastened the surrender of Hong Kong). Imagine coping with all this while the children had chicken pox! The worst, I think, was not being able to flush the toilet. As far as I can remember, there was a little spring in the main courtyard of the house. But, it was during the dry winter months and not much water came through.

On Christmas Day, Hong Kong surrendered to the Japanese. It had been only eighteen days. We could hardly believe the news. We wondered about the poor raw Canadian troops who had only arrived a few days before the war broke out. They hardly knew their way about and used to come and ask us while we were in Idlewild. They looked so young – like school boys.

Our own Hong Kong boys had joined the Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Force. We lost many of them during the two weeks fighting and the rest were interned and most of them sent on to Japan. My sister Jean's husband was one of them. Billy died only three months before the end of the Pacific War. It was a great tragedy. He had so much to live for and was such a very good father to his two children, who had been evacuated to Australia six months before war broke out.

We waited anxiously for what was to follow. It wasn't long before Father's house was occupied by the Japanese. They had taken over all the large houses to house their officers. We considered ourselves lucky not be turned out into the streets and so remained in the basement. Our food had run very low so there was a minimum to eat and we tried to ration everyone. But, a lot of the food was being pilfered – quite easy in a large household with many servants and "hangers on".

The Japanese officers took over the top three floors of Idlewild. They had celebrations and drinking. We were terrified, especially the younger women. We tried to make ourselves as plain as possible!

I shall never forget that night. They marched into the basement room. We huddled on the floor. I clutched on to my children. The soldiers were dirty, unshaven and stank because they had just come from the trenches and the fighting. I shall always remember the stark terror I felt at that moment. I held my breath as they asked for women!

Fortunately, Irene's husband, Sandy, could speak Japanese as he had part of his education in Japan. He promised them he would find them the appropriate women. They sullenly stalked off upstairs.

The next day, there was a frantic search for the "suitable" women for them, but not knowing where to begin, they couldn't be found. So, that evening, getting themselves drunk, the Japanese came down again to demand their women and banged and shook our door. Sandy saved our lives. He went out and, somehow, enticed them upstairs and entertained them all evening with the firm promise he would find them the women.

Next day, the women were found – a whole truck load of prostitutes! They came laughing, giggling and screaming off the truck. There was a doctor amongst the officers and he vetted each woman before she was accepted and turned the others away! We had peace, at last.

The days passed. I still had no news of K.C. Daily, I went out to the garden and looked across the harbour for signs of life. No boats; nor were the ferries crossing. It must have been the quietest time ever in Hong Kong harbour, which is the busiest in the world. It was an eerie feeling, this stillness and quietness after all the bombing and shelling. My heart sank with apprehension and foreboding. I wondered what the future would hold for me and my children. "Where was K.C.? Had he been killed in the fighting? Why was there no news of him?" I must try to do something to find out.

Soon, the opportunity arose. Mrs Archer, being English, had to report at Murray Parade Ground, which was in town, together with all the other British people, to prepare for internment in Stanley Camp, on the south side of the island. I took the opportunity to go down town with her. Father's Chinese nurse (who could speak Japanese) came down with us. As soon as the fighting was over and before the Japanese were able to take control completely, a lot of looting had been going on unchecked. No place was safe, as hooligans ruled the streets. We gingerly made our way through the crowded narrow streets, (we took a short cut straight down), towards the harbour. The cobbled stone street was steep and difficult to negotiate amongst the rowdy and jostling crowds.

Suddenly, we were stopped in our tracks by six men wielding revolvers and knives. They pushed the three of us into a narrow passage-way and began searching us. They shouted at us to hand over any money or jewels. Mrs Archer was wise and handed over her thick gold wedding ring and so they didn't search her. She had all her money hidden in her bosom! I gave them a five dollar bill, which I had up my sleeve and told them "That is all I possess," which was quite true. They looked at my hands for rings. I had on my platinum wedding ring, which didn't interest them, at first, but one of the more knowledgeable men snatched it off my finger. They then began to undress me. It irritated me so much I began to argue with them. My other companion, Father's nurse, begged me, "Please, eighth mistress," (we daughters were known by our numbers and we were eight girls in all) "*don't* argue with them, they are serious and they will harm you." I was so angry, I didn't care. But, suddenly, one of them produced a knife, "Any more from you and I shall kill you!" I was silenced. Under my Chinese "cheung sarm" they found my Rolex fob watch, which I had forgotten I had pinned on that morning. Wendy said that had I not taken it off her (I had pinned it on her the day before to console her over some little trouble she had), I would not have lost it. Of course, the men took it off me. They were very cross that I had hidden something from them and they thoroughly searched me down to my underwear, it was so humiliating.

Next, they started on the nurse. She had to take down her hair, which was done up in a bun. She had to take off her shoes. At last, they were satisfied and we were ordered to get dressed. "And, don't you dare tell anyone, or we will shoot you!" they threatened as they pushed us back into the crowded street.

We continued our way down, as I looked back, the men were watching us, hands on their revolvers.

The reaction set in; I was not cross any more. Instead, I began to weep. "What am I to do? I've lost my wedding ring. K.C. will be so cross with me!" Little did I know at that time how insignificant a material possession like a wedding ring would mean in life when one was struggling for survival.

When we arrived in town, Mrs Archer went off to the Murray Parade Ground. We said our fond good-byes, little realising that we wouldn't be seeing her for another fifteen years!

The Nurse and I wandered about from place to place trying to get news of K.C. Nobody seemed to know the fate of those on the other side of the harbour. My hopes were dashed, so we sadly made our way home and, this time, we *didn't* take the short cut.

Day followed day and still there was no news. I was getting very depressed and felt unwanted and a burden in my Father's house. There was always the worry of being in the same house with the Japanese.

At last, over a month later, K.C. appeared with another man, who had helped to get him across the harbour on a "walla-walla" (a small motor boat). We were all overjoyed to see him. We quickly talked things over. There was the choice of our remaining in Idlewild, or going across to Kowloon with him. Of course, I chose to go. Nothing was going to part us again.

So, packed with our meagre belongings, we made the journey across to Kowloon on a similar motor boat.

K.C. took us to the Chinese Y.M.C.A. situated at the junction of Nathan Road and Waterloo Road. It was beside Kwong Wah Hospital and opposite the mortuary. K.C. and the other doctors and nurses were told to leave Kowloon Hospital while the Japanese took over the building and, on the hospital grounds, which were clearly marked with a Red Cross, they placed their cannons to aim at Hong Kong Island so that we could not hit back, thinking it was still a hospital. The doctors and nurses took some food from the hospital with them to the Y.M.C.A. This consisted of soya bean powder and cracked wheat. Not at all a very interesting diet, but it saved our lives. Each person was given a ration (carefully weighed out) every day. The vitamins in the food kept us well.

Later, as the nurses and doctors escaped into free China, they were given a few rations to last them till they crossed the border. The British nurses and doctors were already interned.

In this building, meant for young Chinese men, the rooms were not exactly palatial. In fact, they were no more than cubicles! We occupied two cubicles, K.C. and I in one of them and the three children in the other. Everything was very primitive. But, it was the happiest time of my life. We were all one family again and had survived the fighting and bombing. It didn't matter that we had only H.K. $5 between us in the whole world. We had lost our home. The Japanese had occupied it with their lady friends and had systematically stripped it of all its contents, including the furniture, which they shipped to Japan. All that was left were my shoes, which were too big for the "the ladies" and one or two pieces of valueless furniture. But, this didn't matter, I thought, "We are safe and we can always start again after the war." Little did I know what a long, long time this would be!

As we lived on in the Y.M.C.A., things got worse for everyone. The bank accounts were frozen and people were left destitute. We could see the suffering around us. There were hungry people everywhere and some were dying on the streets. At first, the children and I tried to take a little food we could spare across the road to the dying, but, after a while, we knew it was only prolonging the agony. Daily, dead bodies were picked up and thrown on to trucks, which brought them to the mortuary opposite. One day, I counted three trucks and each one was literally piled high with dead bodies, which were just thrown on and off like dead fish.

As people laying dying on the streets, unscrupulous men would go around pulling out their gold teeth! We would hear the screams. The dead weren't even safe then as, often, as starvation got worse, the desperate would come to slice off the flesh from their thighs. I have seen many a corpse without a piece of flesh on their inner thigh. All this sounds horrific, but it is true and will give a picture of what it was like in those days of the Japanese occupation.

The days drifted by, one day merging with another. The public was not provided with any rations. We noticed friends beginning to swell with early signs of beri-beri. Some did not survive. It hit the old and the very young. We were so fortunate to get our soya bean powder and cracked wheat gruel – but this also was coming to an end.

Gradually, a few at a time, the doctors and nurses left. We wondered what we should do. It was more difficult to move about with three small children, but we felt eventually we should try to escape into free China also.

It was announced the banks would be open soon. Each person was allowed to draw out H.K.$200, which was really a pittance. Having a joint account, that was all we could withdraw. We used the money very carefully. One of the first things I bought was a pair of hair clippers, scissors and a comb! These proved to be very useful all through the war. We also bought some tinned food, the price of which was already soaring. I also bought some wool to knit the children something warm. I knew I should need this as they grew. Soon, all the money was gone. The policy in those days was never to keep money – always change it into a commodity as the former would be devalued over night and the latter would shoot up in price.

We met up with my sister, Grace, who had decided to escape into China with her husband and little Shirley. She was selling some of her jewellery to get enough money for the journey and I also sold mine, together with hers.

I was very lucky, indeed, to have my jewellery with me. This was normally kept in the safe deposit box in the bank. When each daughter got married, Father gave us a good dowry. Mine consisted of my household furniture and some very good jewellery, e.g. diamond ear rings, bracelet, ring and brooch. This jewellery helped to save our lives. To this day, I wonder what we would have done without this material help. I felt that all through the war, help would come in some way, or other, either materially, or by God "sending his angels" in the form of some persons who would appear just at the time when help was needed most. Our faith kept us going throughout the war.

With the money from the jewellery, we bought Chinese currency for use in our hoped for escape into China eventually, we hoped. This did not prove to be sound judgement on our part.

I forgot to mention that before we were able to draw money from the bank, I had managed to save one camera, a very good German Leica, which we sold first. We spent the money on food as things were getting desperate. Somehow, we always managed to survive.

Soon, we had to leave the Y.M.C.A. We moved over to the island and found accommodation in a deserted hostel of the Hong Kong University. It was situated in the mid-levels.

Dr Selwyn-Clarke, K.C.'s head of department, was allowed out to help organise the control of the general health and hygiene of Hong Kong. This was important work as Hong Kong suffered from infectious diseases, like cholera, typhoid, dysentery, malaria, to name a few. He was still very much needed by the Japanese.

Selwyn was not only K.C.'s head of department, he was also a friend. I remember soon after we came over to the island, we met him carrying a gunny sack full of loaves of bread. He asked whether we wanted a loaf. We all chorused, "Yes, please." This loaf was to be very precious to us. We hadn't tasted bread for months and this loaf was eked out thin slice by thin slice for well over two weeks! The children always referred to him as "Dr Seven-o-clock" – they couldn't twist their tongues around his name. Whenever K.C. met up with him during the short period he was allowed out, he would secrete a jar of jam "for the children," he would say.

It was Selwyn Clarke who persuaded K.C. to remain in Hong Kong and not to go into China. "Yeo," he said, "you are needed here. The health of the Colony now relies on you. The Japanese have no idea of public health. Your own people depend on you now and also the internees at Stanley Camp. They will be interning me soon and you will be the only one left out who knows about the running of the health department." This changed K.C.'s mind about escaping into free China. He decided to stay behind. It was to be a fateful decision.

K.C. carried on his health work the best he could. It was not easy with the Japanese looking over his shoulder and giving counter orders right and left.

In the meantime, we made the best of life in May Hall, where we were accommodated. We were joined by some Malayan Chinese university students. We made friends with a few and four of them were to join us when we moved away. The parents of one of them had sent word from Singapore to ask K.C. to keep an eye on him as most of the Malayan Chinese students were stranded in Hong Kong for the duration.

It was now well into 1942. I think it was during March/April that, one morning, we were woken at 5.30 with loud bangings at the door. Two Japanese Gendarmes (equivalent to the Gestapo) forced their way into our bedroom. K.C. had just managed to get up, while I still lay terrified in bed. They ordered K.C. to get dressed. "There is a dead body down at the gate," they said. "We want you to identify it." We both knew it was just a pretext to get him out. K.C. muttered to me under his breath, "I think this is it, try and get help." (He knew they were taking him away as many others had been taken, just on suspicion). "Keep silent – no talking," they commanded. We didn't say another word.

They took him out and I hurriedly got dressed. The children were still in bed and I tried my best not to disturb them, or let them be frightened by what was happening.

In a short while, two other Gendarmes came back. "Where are all your husband's papers?" they demanded. "He hasn't any, as we are just refugees here," I replied. "Show us his desk," they insisted. They turned out all the drawers of the desk in the verandah. There were no papers of any importance, but what was more valuable to me were photos and negatives of the children since babyhood that I had managed to retrieve from my home. "Please don't take these," I pleaded, "they are only photos of my children." "Well, you can claim them back later," they said. But, of course, I never did see them again.

"What passport have you?" they pressed on. "British, of course. I am a Hong Kong citizen," I replied. They soon came across the passports. Just as well I didn't try to hide this fact. Some people were so afraid they destroyed their British passports.

They then searched the drawers of the dressing table. I began to thank God that just a few days previously I had removed the Chinese currency we had bought in readiness to escape to China and later changed our minds, but could not change it back to Japanese yen. This was due to the fact that there was an announcement to say, "Anyone caught with

Chinese currency in their possession will be beheaded." (This was their favourite form of punishment).

As I was saying, I had removed this money to put it into a hole in the wall of the verandah. Against this wall, I had pushed a bookcase. On top of this bookcase, I placed Mamma's photograph, "Please guard this money, Mamma, and may no harm come near us."

Well, after they had pulled out the final drawer of the dressing table, under which I had kept this money, they went on to the verandah and began to search the bookcase! They went through the books one by one. I held my breath and prayed to Mamma for help. They took hold of her photograph and began to tear away the back of the photo frame. Probably, they thought we had hidden some secret papers there. I thought the end had come and they would push the bookcase away and, thus, reveal the money. But they didn't.

The two Japanese had brought their large Alsatian dog with them. But, being a dog lover, I did not show any fear of it and started to make friends with it. I was determined not to show them any fear. This seemed to impress them. It certainly helped with the children and they didn't realise the seriousness of the situation at that time.

When they had finished searching, they filled a sack full of all they wished to re-examine. The most precious of all were my photos and our passports. I followed them out and when I was out of ear shot of the children, I broke down and begged the Japanese not to harm K.C., as he had done nothing wrong. How silly I was.

I came back to the bedroom absolutely shattered. My heart was sinking. What was I to do? The children must not see my panic. It is at such times when one is brought right down that one instinctively turns to God. "Please, Lord, help me. Protect K.C.. Show me what to do. I leave everything in your loving hands." Peace and strength came. By this time, the children were up and nearly dressed. "I must try to find help and see where they had taken K.C. for questioning," I decided.

One of the University boys offered to go with me but, everyone was afraid to help and we got no satisfaction. I was already beginning to worry as to how I was to feed the children. I cut down on food to make it last longer.

It was now nearly a week after K.C. had been taken. One day, there was a knock on the door and an Indian prison warder was there. He handed me a piece of rough paper (I think it was Chinese toilet paper!). On it, K.C. had scribbled that he was imprisoned in a cell in the Central Police Station. He asked me to try to get help for ourselves, but not to name any names of friends, otherwise it would implicate them (K.C. thought I would be taken for questioning too!). He also had written on this note to reward the prison warder in some form! "Well," I thought, "I haven't any money, but I do have a few small cakes." A friend had brought them to me the day before for the children. So, I gave them to him, apologising that I had no monetary reward for him. He understood. Actually, the cakes were a great sacrifice; we were saving them to eat *very* slowly.

The days merged into one another. I had been watching out for K.C. every day, but he did not appear. It was a lonely time. Everyone of my friends was afraid and kept away. I told myself that I understood, that I did not wish to implicate anyone else but it *was* a very lonely time. I felt I wasn't even welcome in my Father's house. My sister, Victoria, tried to send me some rice, but I kept away from her home as her husband had been a very influential person in the former British Government and I was sure the Japanese had been keeping an eye on him, too. I did not wish to complicate matters for them.

After about two weeks, the Japanese turned up and told me I had to leave. The University buildings were Japanese property, they said, and my husband was a prisoner and, therefore, an enemy, and we had to go.

I was desperate. Where was I to go? I had no money to pay any rent. No one would like to be involved with me. I was very grateful to Teik Seng, a University boy studying medicine at the time war broke out. He came forward and offered to take me round to look for accommodation. We tramped the streets to no avail. I was exhausted and desperate. What *was* I to do?

Once again in my life, "an angel" came to the rescue. My sister, Mary, said, "There are a couple of rooms free in my father-in-law's house in Pokfulum", (on the west side of the Island). I jumped at it with gratitude. The Japanese had only given me a week to get out and threatened to throw us out if we had not gone by then! How thankful I was that help came just in time.

It was not difficult to move. Somehow, we had retrieved Wendy's pram, an old fashioned deep one with strong springs. That pram held everything we possessed. It was to become very much a part of our lives for the next four years. It went everywhere with us. It helped us with all our "moves". It transported the children, especially Wendy, who was still too small to walk any distance and it was our only means of transport!

We settled in the two rooms with relief and thankfulness. But, K.C. was still in prison. It was really a lovely house we were in, only I was too worried to appreciate it. It was a spacious family home with a large garden and lawn. There was a stream nearby, which gave out a peaceful sound of running water, which K.C. always liked to hear.

I asked permission to dig a piece of the lawn at one end to grow myself some food. Teik Seng dug two beds and we started to grow some vegetables. Not knowing when K.C. would return, I decided I had to become as self-sufficient as possible.

It was strange, on looking back, that such a large house was occupied by so few. We had strict instructions that the children were not to go into the library and touch any books. I didn't feel particularly welcome.

Day after day, we struggled on. The children were developing sores on their legs, which were the first signs of malnutrition. They were losing weight, but I had to continue to cut down the consumption of food to make it last.

In my desperation to get news of K.C., I asked Father's nurse to go with me to see the Japanese Gendarme who was in charge of Father's house in town. He had to keep check of all the occupants. We went to see him in Kowloon at his home to ask him to help me to locate K.C. (I was not supposed to know where he was) and to ask why they were detaining him. We waited for days. He had promised to do his best (he was not as aggressive as the other Gendarmes) and that he would try to get K.C.'s release. As we had no news from him, we decided to call on him again.

This time, he was very uneasy and told us we were not to come to him again. He was sorry he could not help. K.C.'s was not a civil case, but a political one and it was serious. He was being tried for spying. "The leader of the gang of spies has already been condemned to death" (which was beheading and it was Dr Selwyn Clarke! He later had a reprieve from the sentence). "What about my husband," I asked in horror. "Well," he answered, "he is being tried at the moment and the verdict hasn't been decided. However, here is my card. You may use it when you try to bring food to him in prison."

And try I did. Every day, I would walk from Pokfulum to the Central Police Station in town, which was two to three miles each way and on hilly roads: not an easy task when I was weak and hungry myself. Time and time again, they refused to accept the food for K.C. The Japanese prison guards were rude, bad tempered and uncouth. I would humble myself and beg them to take the food for K.C. but, in the two months, it was only two or three times he ever received it. Of course, it wasn't much. The food mainly consisted of dry iron ration biscuits, which I had saved from the four University boys' rations. (They were volunteer soldiers during the fighting and were issued with rations then.)

Then the rumours began. So-called friends would come to me and say, "I don't really wish to worry you, but I have bad news of K.C. They say the Japanese have already beheaded him!", or someone else would say, "I really don't want to upset you, but someone has just been released and he told me he saw some blood on the table and the Japanese told him that it was K.C. Yeo's blood – they had cut off all his fingers!"

I was horrified. I just could not bear the suspense any more. I *must* find out the worst. I devised a plan. I packed some clothes and some food and set off to the prison. When I got there, I approached the guard with as much charm and persuasion as I could – there was no self pride left in me – I must find out the worst about K.C., I said to him, "I should be very grateful, indeed, if you would be so kind as to hand these clothes to my husband. You see, he has not had a change of clothing. I could take the soiled ones home to wash (I was determined to get proof that he was still alive). Please, I know you are kind!" He looked at me sullenly. "You will have to wait," he said gruffly. "I don't mind waiting. I have all the time in the world. Only, it would be so nice if he could get this parcel." He grudgingly took it from me.

I sighed with relief. There was, at last, a glimmer of hope. I sat down on a bench and began to wait and pray that, indeed, he would come back with K.C.'s soiled clothing and *then* I would be sure he was still alive. I waited for what seemed an eternity, but did not show any impatience. I had, by now, learned patience in life.

The Japanese guard came along, at last, with a parcel. I undid it immediately and, to my utter relief and joy, I knew for certain they were K.C.'s clothes and that he was still alive. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart. I went home with the good news. All was well with Daddy, I told the children.

The days drifted by. It was two months since K.C. had been taken. The food and money had nearly come to an end. I was worried, depressed, lonely and desperate. How was I to carry on? I could not cut down any more on the childrens' food. The sores on their legs (pellagra) were getting worse. They had lost so much weight.

Then, one day, quite suddenly, there was a knock on the door and there was K.C., as large as life and not looking very different from the day he disappeared! I rushed down the stairs and hugged him, tears of relief streaming down my face, with the children jumping about excitedly, "Daddy's back, Daddy's back!"

As I said, there seemed to be little outward change in K.C. He was thinner, but just as calm. His face was, of course, quite pale, having been in a cell all this time.

He told us that when he was released he didn't know where we were, so he took a chance and called in at a restaurant, Wiseman's, where our sister-in-law used to work. She was still there and was able to direct him to us, first of all offering him a good meal, which he gratefully took, but, unfortunately, this upset him for days afterwards! His stomach was unused to food.

K.C. began, a bit at a time, to tell me his story. He was taken that morning from our bedroom straight to Central Police Station and was thrown into his cell of eight by five feet. The door was banged shut. He felt a chill of complete devastation. "This is the end for me," he thought. He look around the little cell. There were no windows; only a tiny aperture near the ceiling. At the bottom of the door, was a small gap. This enabled the food to be thrown in – two small handfuls of boiled rice wrapped in dirty newspaper each day. By the same gap, the "bucket" was emptied. There was not a single bit of furniture in the cell. The floor was bare concrete. The weather was still damp and chilly and when K.C. realised that he would have to sleep on the bare concrete, he attracted the attention of the Indian warden.

K.C. understood Indians, as he used to go to school with them in Penang. So, he persuaded the guard to find him something to lie on, "Perhaps a stretcher?" Soon, he was relieved to find that an old stretcher *was* found and brought in to him. This, at least, kept him from the damp floor.

The daily 9-5 questioning began. K.C. was told that he was suspected of spying, "You are a member of a gang of spies, the head of which is Dr Selwyn Clarke and you are the Deputy," he was accused. K.C. denied this. (We later learned that five other people were imprisoned at the same time as K.C., all suspected of spying.)

"Yes, you are a spy and your spy ring has been passing on messages to the American submarines, which are outside the harbour, to sink our ships as soon as they leave Hong Kong. You had better tell me the truth right now, or else – do you hear the groans next door? Well, it will be your turn next to be tortured if you don't tell the truth. This threat was made after a few days of constant cross examination. K.C. was taken back to his cell to think it over for the night. He would be tortured the next day if he didn't confess.

The whole of that night he didn't sleep. He was praying to God to show him what to do. At dawn, the answer came, "Do not be afraid. I will be with you. Tell them about your diary."

Next day, when K.C. mentioned he kept a diary, the interrogator was very excited and asked, "Where is it, where is it?" "Well," said K.C., "you took it from me when you searched me." Orders were given to find the diary. This saved him from torture and, for the next week, K.C. was left in his cell while they poured over every detail of the diary.

Then came weeks of questioning, as every page of the diary was scrutinised. K.C. was very anxious, indeed, about certain parts of the diary as he had helped towards the escape of nurses and doctors into free China. Each time a tricky part of the diary was reached, the bell rang – it was time to stop. K.C. had the whole night to pray about it. He always had the answer. "Tell them the truth. Do not be afraid. I will be with you." And, indeed, all was well. K.C. began to rely more and more on these times of prayer, and sensing The Presence of Christ, he became converted. His fear left him.

It seemed the Japanese were satisfied after the weeks of questioning and K.C. was removed from his first cell and placed into another one, where he joined a friend and relative of mine, George She. They were overjoyed to meet each other. George was one of the five who were "taken in".

George was an Anglican minister. He taught K.C. to sing hymns. They had a joyous time together. One day, George said to K.C., "I know you believe in Jesus Christ, K.C., but have you been baptised?"

"No," answered K.C., "Is it necessary?"

"Yes, it is," explained George. "In this way, you can become a witness for Him."

"Well," promised K.C., "then I shall be baptised and my family with me, if I come out of this alive." And so we all were, as one family, before long.

After another few weeks with George, they were ordered out of the cell and, after shaving off their beards, (K.C. said he had looked like Confucius and George had looked like Vasco da Gama!), they were taken to the Supreme Court in the centre of town.

At the Supreme Court, prisoners waited for their fate. Some were condemned to death and others were released. The suspense for George and K.C. was unbearable. They held their breath for the final verdict. They were free, but had to promise never to try to escape from Hong Kong. That was no problem for K.C. as he had promised Selwyn-Clarke long ago that he would stay and carry on his health work. From then on, till the end of the Pacific War, the Japanese authorities ordered that K.C. should be "shadowed all the time". We didn't know this until we were told after the war! They said he was very dull to shadow as all he did was to go to the Bacteriological Institute, where he worked, and then home at the end of the day. We went nowhere.

As we look back, we still marvel at the miraculous way we all survived as one family, while so very many other families lost their loved ones.

Soon after K.C. returned to us, we decided to find other accommodation. We did not want to be dependent on relatives, or to involve them in any way. We found a top floor flat nearby. It was quite spacious and we were able to house our family and Teik Seng, who had joined us by then. We even had one of the servants' rooms converted into a hen house! We thought if we kept half a dozen laying hens, we could sell the eggs and buy a cheaper form of protein, like beans, to feed the family.

There was quite a lot of ground for growing vegetables. There were four flats in all and each flat was allocated a piece of land. Teik Seng helped me deep-dig the vegetables beds. We grew sweet potatoes, tomatoes and Chinese string beans in their seasons. Sweet potato tops were normally fed to pigs but this became our main and cheapest source of green vegetables. We acquired quite a taste for it. Sweet potatoes were our main source of carbohydrates. They were weighed carefully on the Chinese scales and rationed at two ounces each for breakfast, which was all we had in the morning.

We saved every scrap of compost and returned it to the soil. Later, when we moved on to a bungalow, we saved all our "nightsoil", which was wonderful fertiliser and the vegetables grew extremely well.

I think we didn't stay much longer than a year in this flat, when we discovered a little bungalow nearby with more land and more privacy. We were able to rent it for only H.K.$17 a month. It had been badly looted and there were no window or door locks. Everything brass had been looted, it was only a bare shell. The sitting room ceiling and walls were black – someone had cooked with a charcoal fire in it!

The only furniture we found was a broken-down sofa, which was riddled with bed bugs! I still get goose pimples at the thought of those bed bugs. We carried the sofa out into the garden and, each morning, we poured boiling water over it, concentrating on the seams until, days later, we had got rid of the lot. I, then, somehow, managed to repair it, tying the springs together and stuffing it with straw and then covering it with whatever material I could lay my hands on.

Somehow, we begged, or borrowed, whatever we needed to make some sort of a home. Everything was down to basics. We had no soap at all so we used wood ash for washing and even to clean ourselves.

Our knowledge of food values saved our lives as we could survive better by getting cheaper food and vegetable protein, which lasted longer and had more bulk and, therefore, satisfied partially, the constant hunger we felt. The children were always saying, "Mummy, I'm hungry." I felt so helpless at such times.

Everyone's main conversation and thought was of food – what to sell to obtain it, how much it would cost, what we could eat, how to prepare it

We never saw butter, or other dairy produce. The few milking cows in Hong Kong were soon starving and had to be slaughtered for meat. Not that we saw any meat. If we were lucky, we had some very small fish we normally fed to the cats .

Oil was only obtainable at exorbitant prices. So, to save it, we rationed each person to half a teaspoonful to be placed straight on to the boiled rice. We each had half a bowl of rice a day. That was all. To go with the rice, we ate any green vegetable we could grow (it wasn't very palatable cooked without oil). We also managed to get salt fish (a staple diet with the poor). With salt fish, one could only eat very little, but it gave a taste to the rice and vegetables. Towards the last months of the war, we allowed ourselves one egg a day to be given to one person in the family in turn. The other eggs were sold – I went out, personally, myself, to peddle them – little had I known that I would reach such depths of poverty.

We began systematically to plan the ground for growing our food. This had to be done in terraces as the bungalow was on a hill. We kept the rows of tomatoes and beans nearer the house as they were more valuable products, while the sweet potatoes and, later, "yam", which was also a form of carbohydrate, was planted further away. During the last few months of the war, we saw little of the root crops down the hill as they were usually stolen before we could harvest them. Thieves would come and dig them up and stick the tops back into the soil, so it was a day or two before we discovered the theft!

By this time, Dick was growing up. He was ten or eleven years old and growing so sensible. He did a man's work in the garden, carrying buckets of water to water the vegetables. In Hong Kong, we had to water the plants nearly every day. Sometimes, twice a day. Dick would also help in the digging and any odd jobs that were going. We were a very close-knit family.

As I mentioned before, when I had sold my jewellery, we had changed a lot of it into Chinese currency. This, we had to hide carefully. So, when we moved to the bungalow, we dug a hole, where we kept the hens, placed the money in a tin and buried it for the duration of the war. By which time, the currency was so devalued, it was worth next to nothing!

It seemed, during those years, we lost out on everything material. They were very lean years, indeed. But, on hindsight, we gained considerably in our faith as Christians. We became conscious of what was important in life. Even now, I hold very lightly all that is material. I enjoy material things and am grateful for them, but do not clutch on to them. I feel I am only a custodian of what I own.

With the money from the jewellery I sold, I sent quite a lot, via Grace, to repay a loan K.C. had from Eva, while he was doing postgraduate work in England. With what was left, I bought tinned food. This had to last, a little at a time, for as long as we could manage. I had a little storeroom, the key to which I kept myself. Sometimes, I felt I had to lock it against myself so that I would not desperately reach for food when I was hungry.

Every day, I would carefully measure out the day's ration of rice and sweet potato. We bought slab raw cane sugar, the cheapest we could find and rather dirty, as flies often settled on the slabs in the streets and the preparation of it left a lot to be desired. Still, it was sugar and something sweet for the children. Unfortunately, it gave them worms, which added to our problems!

K.C. was "paid" with a small bag of rice each week, which was supposed to feed us – it was only sufficient for a proper meal for all of us for one day! Much of the rice was adulterated with little grains of sand to increase the weight. The grains of rice were never whole, they were always broken up into little pieces and were usually full of weevils and cockroach "droppings".

It was a job for Daphne and Wendy to sit for hours sorting the rice, picking out the weevils and bits of sand, hours and hours of tedious work. But they were good children and each wanted to feel useful.

Soon after we moved over to the bungalow the three other University boys joined us. They had no home and were stranded in Hong Kong for the duration of the war. Their parents lived in Malaya. Two of them were medical students and one of them an engineering student. So we offered them our home and together we decided to help one another.

I still had a few small pieces of jewellery left. I sold a brooch set with an opal surrounded by diamonds. It was quite a pretty thing and it was a shame to part with it, but we had to survive. With the money, we bought two bicycles. These bicycles would be used as "taxis" to carry passengers in town. Two boys would take turns each day to go and try to earn some money and bring it home for the common purse. This gave us a little petty cash. With the rest of the money from the sale of the brooch, we bought four piglets. I thought it would be a good investment as pork fetched a very high price and we could make some money – so I thought.

We were all novices on the rearing of pigs! Of course, having been an agricultural student, I thought I was fairly well equipped with *some* knowledge. I had always dreamed of owning a farm one day.

So we bought some bran for the pigs and fed them with whatever food we could spare and waited for them to grow. We waited and waited, but still they didn't grow – not one bit. We wondered what on earth was the matter with them and later discovered that the bran we were feeding them was adulterated with sawdust! No wonder they didn't grow. We changed over to proper bran. Three of the piglets grew a little and we marketed them as soon as we could, but the fourth one never grew. The boys would look at this little pig and they all nodded their heads and said to each other, "Doesn't he look like Sergeant Walker?" Sergeant Walker was one of their sergeants when they served in the Volunteers. So from then on the little runt was called Sergeant Walker. Poor thing, try as we would to fatten him he never grew, therefore, he couldn't be sold. So when Christmas came we decided to do the inevitable – he had to be turned into pork. I couldn't bear to see it. One of the boys volunteered to kill him. Later, what flesh there was, was cut into strips for drying and preserving. We rationed it out although we cooked some right away.

That evening we all looked forward to a real feast with *pork*! We took our first bite, but what a disappointment – we nearly broke our teeth on it, it was so tough! We just could not chew it. It was really frustrating. And that was the end of our adventure with the piglets – a complete loss.

One day, during the summer, there was great excitement in the garden. One of the boys had caught a snake and killed it. That night, I tried my first taste of snake soup. I'm afraid I didn't enjoy it. But the boys devoured it. "Some protein, at least," they said.

We were very successful with our tomatoes and they served as our only form of fruit and our main source of vitamin C. Of course, they only fruited about three to four months in the year.

There was the problem of fuel to cook with. Though we could have electricity in the house, we could not in any way afford it. But the boys did an ingenious thing, though dishonest, but we felt, "why not get something out of the Japanese". The ingenuity was that two electric rings were fixed on to the under part of a table top so that if one turned the table up again, no one would know the electric rings were there! Then, the boys managed to by-pass the meter and so whenever it was safe (we always had someone on the look out), we would cook with it. This saved our firewood, which was getting very low and scarce.

In the end, we had to go out looking for firewood. Occasionally, we had to find a tree to cut down. This was a major operation, done at night, as anyone caught would be shot by the Japanese. The children played their part. They were allowed to stay up that night. Each of them were stationed at a look-out point and would watch out for any Japanese soldier passing by and give the warning signal. Then everyone would remain very quiet in the moonlight until all was clear again.

Once, as a tree was cut, it fell right across the road! It was an horrendous experience and I remember the terror I felt. We all rushed down to drag the tree to one side and as out of sight as possible. It was cut into big logs and the strong boys would carry these home to be hidden as best we could.

Life was always on a knife-edge. Ever since K.C.'s release there was always the fear "they" would come for him again one day. That is why every time there were footsteps or a knock on the door we would be anxious.

We had no news of what was happening in the outside world. Radios were confiscated. There were no newspapers, except the one the Japanese printed with distorted news. We learned in the end to decipher it by reading between the lines – the more Allied shipping was sunk, the greater the Japanese losses.

The colony's population gradually diminished. Many had escaped to China, many were imprisoned and very many were starved to death. Some dying people were picked up in the streets and loaded into junks and taken and dumped into the sea. Some say sharks were attracted into the south side of the island because of this. We seldom had sharks near our shores. The colony's population fell to 500,000 from about three million before the war. It was like a ghost town. Once, we walked up to the Peak. There was not a soul in sight. All the houses were either destroyed by bombs, or mercilessly looted. It was a very distressing and chilling sight.

Hong Kong was completely isolated. The Americans did a good job in blockading the island. No food or other supplies were coming in. We had just to survive on what was left on the island. It was quite ingenious how we managed to make do. Everything was saved, a piece of string, a bit of wire, a nail, a rubber band. To this day, I find it hard to throw any of these things away! I've become a real hoarder!

During all this struggle, Dick became ill . We thought it was just the 'flu. This went on for a few days, but there was no sign of 'flu symptoms. K.C. wasn't happy about this and suspected something intestinal. "Can you get me a specimen of Dick's stool to take to work?" he asked me, "I want to examine it bacteriologically to find out what is wrong." That evening, K.C. returned looking solemn. Dick had typhoid fever. This was a serious thing. Typhoid was a dreaded disease and often proved fatal. There was no treatment in those days, only careful nursing and a strict diet.

We were afraid to tell anyone. "Oh, he just has the 'flu," we evaded. Anyone suffering from an infectious disease was removed into the infectious disease hospital and literally left to die. The Japanese were terrified of infection.

Day after day, I nursed Dick very carefully. My nursing training came in handy. He had to be shifted only very carefully as the intestines could easily be perforated. I fed him only with rice gruel, which was boiled thoroughly. Gradually and slowly, he recovered, but it left him a skeleton and so weak he could hardly stand. There was not the right food to help him recover. We were just thankful he was still alive.

There was a touching sequence to Dick's illness. As I have related, he was left just a shell of his former self. He became quiet and withdrawn and could barely move about. Seeing he was out of danger, I threw myself into the work of survival and didn't notice him much. One day, I found him sitting on the steps crying to himself. I sat by him and asked, "What is the matter, Dick. Had a quarrel with your sisters?"

"No," he mumbled.

"Are you not feeling well again?" I pressed on.

"No," he replied.

"Then what is the matter, why are you crying?"

"Well," he sobbed, "I've been thinking, I should have died when I was ill." Horrified, I asked, "Whatever makes you say that?!"

"Because I'm not able to do my share of the work and yet I'm eating a share of the food." I was absolutely amazed that a child so young should think like that. I also felt very guilty that I had neglected the psychological side of the upbringing of my children due to the dire necessity to survive physically.

At once, I said to Dick, "Look, there is a lot you can do to help. We need to have the tomato seeds saved soon, so will you do this, dry and label them and any other vegetable seeds that can be saved? It would be a great help. And don't think you are useless any more. He nodded and was reassured. He made a marvellous job of seed collection and labelling being a neat and methodical worker.

We tried to live as normal a life as we possibly could for the sake of the children. Occasionally, we would go for a picnic and swim at Telegraph Bay. This was a small rocky bay within walking distance of the bungalow. We would take the pram in case any of the children got too tired to walk. We used it to hold our "picnic", which was a meagre bit of food we scraped together to make it seem "special". The water was clean, inviting and refreshing. But one particular day we were unwise enough to allow the children in when the sea was rough and Dick and Wendy were rather badly injured. Wendy cut her knee badly, while Dick had a very nasty gash on his thigh. The bleeding was profuse and we had to use considerable pressure to stop it. Actually, they needed stitching, but it wasn't any use getting them to a hospital. We didn't know what condition the hospital would be in and didn't wish to risk it, so, instead we stuck some cotton wool soaked in Friar's Balsam over the wound. To us, Friar's Balsam was our main first aid remedy. It really was a god-send. Of course, we had to ferry our two injured children back in the pram. I really don't know what we would have done without it.

One of the times we went to Telegraph Bay, we came across a dead body by the road side. It must have been there for days. It had turned black and bloated and the putrid smell of death hung about and wafted a great distance. The flies swarmed around it. This so terrified the children that Dick remembers he had nightmares about it long afterwards. It was not an unusual thing to see the dead lying about the streets in those days. But this was a great shock for the children as it was far away from town and so unexpected.

Occasionally, when we had a birthday celebration, we would open one of our very precious tins of corned beef and "fry" some rice with it, making some form of fried rice. It tasted good and was a real treat. Often we became so obsessed with food, we just sat and talked about it and what we would like to eat, or what we missed eating. One thing I always dreamt about was hot buttered toast.

Because of the lack of toys, the children were forced to use their imagination and improvised their own toys and their own games. I once managed to make a rag doll for Wendy's birthday. I think it was called Greta!

The children played about bare footed as they had outgrown their shoes and we couldn't afford to buy them new ones. When we had to go out into the road, they would wear their old shoes with the toes cut away; this left room for their growing feet.

Our clothes were wearing out. I spent all my quieter times mending. I would cut the trouser legs to patch the knees and seats. Then, the sleeves of shirts would be cut to patch the shoulders. I became quite expert at mending. In fact, I used the same method to stitch up one of the University boys who were staying with us when he cut his scalp. I think I put in three stitches with an ordinary needle and thread! Scalp wounds bleed a lot and the scalp was tough, but I was determined to mend the gaping wound. I managed eventually, but promptly "passed out" after it.

Talking about heads reminds me of how I tried to earn a little spare cash, or a free meal, or a little rice to bring home, by doing some hair cutting. I had become quite expert by now having had practice since I bought the clippers and scissors right after the Japanese occupied Hong Kong. Another thing I did to try to earn some money while we were living in May Hall was to walk down to town each day and work in the basement room of a hairdressing salon. I had taken a diploma in facial massage, so I worked there for a while doing some manicures, as well. There were still at that time people who could afford such luxuries. I would carry my bit of lunch down in a little tin carrier, my ration of rice and vegetables for the day. Dr Selwyn Clarke came to see where I was working and was worried about the conditions. It was dark and damp in the basement and ill-ventilated, but what was most worrying was the fact that the owner, who worked in the same room, was an advanced case of tuberculosis of the lungs. He was coughing up blood. Selwyn advised me and told K.C. to stop me working there as the danger of infection was too great and I might give it to the children. So, eventually I stopped.

In the evenings, during our time in the bungalow, we would all gather together and the adults would take turns reading Van Loon's "History of Mankind". I don't know where we got the book, but it was interesting and I think Dick was old enough to take it in. Those days together as a close-knit family leave me with happy memories of the war.

The distance from K.C.'s work to the bungalow was rather too far to travel on foot, so some days when he was feeling tired he would take one of the bicycles to work. One day, there was a telephone call from where he worked. (Our neighbour had a phone and ran over to call me). "Mrs Yeo," the voice said, "I am phoning from the Bacteriological Institute. Your husband has had a fall from his bicycle and is hurt. Will you come and take him home?" Immediately, I got ready to go.

One of the primitive means of transport down our hill to the Bacteriological Institute was devised by some young boys near us. It consisted of a board on four wheels. The "passenger" would stand on the board grasping on some rail or other and the only means of braking would be a little board, which trailed on behind, with the small boy stepping on it whenever necessary!

I had always avoided going on one of these and preferred my own two legs. But this day, I was in a hurry to get to K.C., so I braced myself and got on one. What an experience! I didn't ever try again!

I got to the Bacteriological Institute and found K.C. looking pale and dazed. He had skidded on his bike around a corner and I think must have hit his head against the lamp post. While he was lying in the road unconscious, people came to try to rob him. Luckily, he came round in time to stop them. I managed to hire a rickshaw (quite a luxury in those days) and, with help, got him into it. The rickshaw gently took him home, with me walking beside it.

It was quite a problem getting him up the steep slope to the bungalow. The other entrance was even more difficult as it meant climbing up the long flight of steep steps. With the help of the boys, we carried him up and I put him to bed right away.

K.C. was concussed for ten days; he lay in bed, unable to get up without feeling dizzy. Since this fall, his memory has been impaired quite a bit, so he says! I suppose he was such a brilliant student that he would have noticed the difference, but, to me, his brain was still far superior to mine! Slowly, he recovered and, after resting a few more days, he had to go back to work. We were all very relieved as it could have been so much worse.

All these years since the Japanese invasion of Hong Kong, the children were unable to go to school. We tried to organise some sort of teaching between us. The engineering student, Wing, tried to teach them "sums". Archibald, the medical student, taught them a bit of English and Wee Soon, also a medic, taught them a little geography. Anyway, we all tried in our spare time, which wasn't much, to pass on *some* knowledge to the children. Dick would be the one to suffer most as he was in the age group which should be having proper schooling. He was between the ages of eight and twelve years. But, as I said before, he had an enquiring mind and "mopped up" any knowledge that came his way. We had a few old copies of Readers' Digest lying around and he used to teach himself to read, always asking us about words he did not understand, or could not read. Soon, he built up quite a vocabulary and was able to enjoy the magazine.

My sister, Vic, who stayed on in her own home for the duration, was a bit better off as she didn't lose much. Her daughters were sent in to free China, together with Grace, as the risk of young girls remaining was too great. The Japanese could not be trusted. Only Tak Shing, her young son remained. He was between Dick and Daphne in age and was quite mischievous. He didn't believe in work at all and used to be quite a problem to his mother!

Vic employed a special Chinese lady teacher to come every day to give Tak Shing his lessons. He usually played the fool and didn't concentrate much. I suppose he was such a bright boy he really needed channelling and a meek Chinese lady teacher wasn't quite the right person.

Our three children were invited to go to Vic's twice a week to join in these lessons. They were very excited about this and considered it a privilege to be able to have *real* lessons from a *real* teacher! They concentrated hard at lessons and did their homework diligently. It was such a treat to be able to learn. Often the teacher would hold them up as examples to Tak Shing, who wasn't pleased at all and our children were very embarrassed by it!

Going to Vic's involved quite a long walk along a rough path, which was built over a viaduct. Actually, it was a pleasant level walk, called "Lovers Lane" as our two homes were more or less on the same level. Our home faced south-west and Vic's home faced north. I would often slow down to admire any interesting plant which was growing and also to look down into the harbour, which was still very quiet. There was a peace about this area of the island and I have pleasant memories of it. Of course, from time to time, there would be an air raid siren. The Americans were beginning to be active in the skies and there was the occasional bombing.

One day, the American planes came in droves. I think they were B29's. We got to recognise the sound of the engines. We always got excited when the American planes came; we weren't afraid of being bombed, only glad we had not been forgotten. Well, wave after wave they came and the bombs rained down. They called it carpet bombing! They were aiming at the docks, but there was a high wind and the bombs were dropped from a great height, so the target was missed and a highly populated area, Wanchai, was hit. There was much damage to houses and heavy loss of life.

We, fortunately, were on the other side of the island. We only heard the terrific blast of the bombs and then pieces of paper were floating all over the sky. We all got very excited thinking the Allies were dropping some messages down to us but, it turned out that a paper shop had been bombed! I remember we scrambled all over the hillside looking for the pieces of paper to read the "messages".

As the time went on, we all got thinner and thinner. The children were skin and bone. Wendy, being the youngest, became very frail and we feared we would lose her. The children all tried so hard to be good and often pretended not to be hungry so that I could have a little more to eat as I had been ill. My weight came down to six stone. A few times, I would find Wendy awake in bed, gasping for breath. "Why didn't you call me?" I asked. "I didn't want to disturb you, Mummy," she faintly replied. My heart ached for my children. There was nothing I could do.

Early in the summer of 1945, I felt in my bones that surely the war couldn't last much longer. But, we were greatly worried as to what the Japanese would do to us should the Allies re-take Hong Kong. "They would probably slaughter us all," we thought. However, I felt instinctively that the end was coming, so I carefully and slowly put a little food by whenever I could eke some out from our daily rations. I thought that if I could save two weeks' supply of food, we might survive the final re-occupation of Hong Kong.

Then, suddenly in August, news leaked through and was passed on by word of mouth that the Japanese had surrendered. We were all overjoyed, but everyone was afraid to show any emotion as the news had not yet been announced. So, we had to go around pretending that nothing had happened. Eventually, they had to admit that the war was over, and, thank goodness, there was no actual fighting in Hong Kong.

Unfortunately, although the Americans were at the entrance to the harbour, they did not come in right away. They waited two weeks for the British to arrive to formally take over Hong Kong. During this time, there was chaos. There was much looting and damage to property. In fact, most of the damage done to Hong Kong University was during this period. The Japanese did not bother to keep order any more.

We stayed indoors and kept very quiet until the British warships, commanded by Rear Admiral Harcourt, were in the harbour. We heard of the surrender of Japan and it was not till then we heard of the "big" bomb on Hiroshima, which was the atom bomb and caused the final collapse of Japan. There had been no official news, only rumours.

CHAPTER 10

Aftermath of the War

When all was quiet, we decided to take a walk to find out what was happening. We were walking along the mid-levels, in Bonham Road as far as I can remember, when a jeep drew up and stopped by us. A man in khaki approached us (he was an American war correspondent from Time Magazine) and asked, "Can you speak English? Do you know the way to a place up the Peak?" (and started to describe my father's house). I could hardly believe the coincidence.

Of course, we began to talk – his name was Bill Howland. I corresponded with him at Christmas for many years afterwards. He was fascinated by the children and chatted away with them. They really liked him. He had children himself in America .

"Do you like chocolates?"

"Yes," said Dick excitedly. The other two weren't sure what chocolates were – they couldn't remember.

"Well," said Bill Howland, "if you tell me where you live, I shall come as soon as I have some time off and bring some to you." We gave him our address.

After we returned home, Dick could talk of nothing else but Bill's promised visit. Early next morning, Dick went down to the bottom of our long flight of steps and began to look out for him. He waited all day and every day for many days until he finally gave up. It was pathetic to see the disappointment in the child's face and I began to lose faith in the human race, "What man could disappoint a child like that. Did he not know, or realise, what this child had been through all these four years?" I thought.

Then, one day, when I was in town, I bumped into Bill. He recognised me at once. "Oh, Mrs Yeo, I'm so glad to see you and I'm very sorry I haven't been able to keep my promise to your children. The day after I met you, I was sent to Hunming (in China) and there I came down with malaria. I have only just got back. I shall come to visit you tomorrow, if I may!" My faith was restored. I hurried back to tell the children the good news.

We made preparations to receive our guest. Everything was tidy. The boys helped to prepare whatever food we had – it looked quite presentable.

Bill arrived with a canvas holdall. First of all, he brought out bars of chocolate. Dick's eyes nearly popped out as he gratefully received his gift. The two girls shyly took theirs. Then, Bill rather hesitantly brought out a couple of shirts and two pairs of khaki shorts and, last of all, a nylon parachute! "I was thinking you might find these useful and since I'm returning to America soon, I shall have no use for them." We assured him we would find good use for everything. The canvas bag became our luggage for many a year.

We were fascinated with the parachute. We had not seen nylon before and felt the light soft texture of it. Later, we cut it up and made innumerable garments with it – petticoats, blouses, knickers. These things lasted for years and years.

After the meal, Bill had the children around him. He told them stories and, generally, we all had a good time. We pumped him for news and caught up with the major events of the war and learned about the atom bomb, which had finally saved our lives. He said the Americans were all poised to liberate Hong Kong in August when this happened. If the Americans had come in, I doubt very much that we would have been alive today. K.C.'s brother, Kok Hoe, who was chief of police in the island of Labuan, off North Borneo, was imprisoned by the Japanese. When the Australians landed to liberate the island, he was beheaded by them.

Gradually, the chaos subsided. K.C. went into town to see what he could do and report for work. The British Military Administration had taken charge. Everyone was in uniform. One of the deputy heads of the Medical Department came back as a Colonel.

The boys also reported back to the volunteer headquarters. They received some rations. These rations were to feed us all for the next few weeks.

K.C. fell between two stools. He was neither in the military, nor a prisoner of war in the camps. He found great difficulty getting rations for us, though he was working. It was weeks before this was settled. He was paid a salary at pre-war rates for quite some months, which caused us a lot of hardship. I felt rather bitter about this as he had obeyed orders to stay on and worked right through the war having to fend for himself and his family.

But now we had nothing. One day, I was in town and met up with my sister, Jean. She had come out of camp and was working in the Hong Kong Hotel to help out. She is a very able secretary. She said there was lots to eat and milk was being drunk like water in the camp.

While I was outside the Hotel, I saw a truck being loaded for Stanley Camp. My eyes nearly popped out of my head. There were whole carcasses of meat and cases of tin food. The animal instinct in me welled up. It took all my self control to stop from running across to snatch some food off the truck for my family. Things seemed worse than during the war. At least then, we were all in the same boat.

Somehow, life gradually became normal enough for us to think about some schooling for the children. Of course, schools were still very disorganised, but a start had to be made. As K.C. was still working on the island, we registered Dick in Wah Yan College, which was a Catholic school. The girls were registered in Ying Wah School run by Chinese, so the standard of Chinese was high.

All this period seemed a bit vague to me, but after a few months, K.C. was transferred back to Kowloon. This rather upset me as the children were just beginning to adjust to their school life after all these years. It was decided that Dick would remain in Wah Yan as he was doing well and the girls, who were younger, would follow us over to Kowloon and enter the

Diocesan Girls' School, where I had been a pupil for nearly ten years. Dick stayed with Vic as the Star Ferries were not yet running regularly. But this wasn't for long and a little later he came across to Kowloon to join the girls at the Diocesan Girls' School. All the boys and girls were mixed together in this school for a few months while the Diocesan Boys' School was being refurbished.

When we first moved over to Kowloon, we were able to stay in Grace and and her husband Horace's home in Norfolk Road. They were still away in China and kindly let us have the use of their home in the meantime. This house was in Kowloon Tong, which was called a "garden city" in those days as each little home had a garden. The houses weren't large, about two or three bedrooms, but ample for a small family and to me they were wonderfully homely.

On the north side of the house was a piece of waste ground. The army used it as a camp for some of the troops. Wendy still remembers the sound of the bugle every morning and evening. The children enjoyed watching them drill.

K.C. was taken to work in an army jeep, which was driven by an English soldier and the children also got a lift to school at the same time. It was quite a novelty and I'm sure they felt a bit special to have this privilege. Sometimes, after school, the children managed to get a lift from a truck, which was taking soldiers back to their camp. Quite a few children were picked up and dropped near their homes.

For the children, one of the highlights of the military occupation was that the school was invited to an organised tour of the Battleship, H.M.S. Anson, which took part in the re-occupation of Hong Kong. It was lying in the harbour and dwarfed every other ship in it. We all enjoyed the tour. Midshipman Dick showed us around; he made friends with our Dick and for many years kept up a correspondence with him.

Grace and Horace soon returned and we found another house in Cumberland Road, also in Kowloon Tong. It was only ten minutes' walk away. This house seemed a little larger and so was the garden. We made the best of it in spite of the fact it badly needed painting. We had no furniture, but managed to buy some second hand basic furniture from Government stores. We were able to get beds, chairs, a table to eat from – nothing matched, but we were grateful to get anything at all at a very reasonable price.

I remember the garden was very shady. I don't think there was any planning in it at all. Someone previously seemed to have planted a tree here and there wherever he chose to do so. Some were fruit trees, like papaya, pomegranate and guava. None of them bore much fruit, probably because they were overcrowded and starved of nutrition. But it kept the house cool in the summer. Kowloon Tong is like an oven in the summer. I think it is because it is situated right at the foot of Lion Rock, which runs right across from East to West and so blocked the breeze.

We had quite a few walking picnics up Lion Rock, a favourite place to get away from the town. The children were joined by friends and cousins and cousins' cousins. Quite a group of friends was formed and they were all inseparable for the years we lived in Kowloon Tong. They literally formed a "gang" and had a marvellous time together.

Grace and Horace were very kind to us and helped out by giving us super meals. "It's always nice to have the Yeos for a meal. They are so appreciative of any food we give them." And, indeed, we were. They also supplied us with large bottles of sterilised milk, which helped in building up the children.

The expatriates in the Medical Department were beginning to return from their recuperative leave and it was getting near K.C.'s turn to go for a holiday. He was needing it. There were signs of beri-beri appearing and he had numbness of his fingers. It seemed strange that he had a delayed reaction as there were no symptoms during the war in spite of the starvation diet.

CHAPTER 11

Our Holiday in Australia

We had booked to go to England; we had already made most of the arrangements, when suddenly we received a cable from someone called Pierre Layner, a man we had met by chance in Paris on one of our trips there. He was very friendly, a very extrovert Frenchman. In this cable, he invited us to go down to his home in Sydney for recuperation. He persuaded us that food was more plentiful in Australia and not rationed as in England. Also, the climate was better and it would be an ideal place to build up our strength.

We gratefully accepted and changed our plans, little suspecting what we were to experience.

Before going on this journey, it was necessary for me to get the children some decent clothes and warm ones at that. The only way I could do this was to swallow my pride and approach the Red Cross. All the prisoners in the camps were issued with very nice Red Cross parcels – but, unfortunately we didn't get any. So I had to go to the Headquarters and ask. Fortunately, I knew Mrs King, who was in charge of the clothes. She took us round and saw to it herself that the children were all well equipped from underwear to overcoats and shoes.

The Acting Director of Medical and Health Services, Dr Fehily, advised K.C. to report to the representatives of the Hong Kong Government in Sydney for his back pay. "All the expatriates have received their full four years' back pay, so I don't see why you shouldn't get yours, especially as you have worked all through The Occupation." K.C. said he'd try to apply.

So we were booked to go on a frigate, H.M.S. "Bonadventure". This was in April, 1946. It was very difficult so soon after the war to get any transport to the U.K. or Australia. Very few passenger ships were available. So we considered ourselves lucky to have been able to get on a ship at all. Of course, as many as possible were crowded in, but we didn't mind. We knew quite a lot of the people who were travelling with us. Grace was among them. She was visiting my other sister, Jean, who had already gone on ahead to join her two children, who were evacuated to Melbourne.

We queued up for all our meals, each holding a tin plate. This was no great hardship and we, as a family, were grateful that food was supplied and cooked for us.

Being a frigate, she was rather narrow and tended to roll a bit. On the whole, I'm a good sailor, but K.C. and Daphne aren't and so they didn't feel well the whole journey. It was a fairly uneventful journey. I was just glad to be able to enjoy the sea air and sunshine and not have to struggle to survive or make ends meet. It was a peaceful interlude. But it didn't stay peaceful until the end of the journey.

Soon, Australia was in sight. We docked at Townsville, Queensland. It was very hot here. But as we left the ship to stretch our legs, we found that nearly all of us were making our way to the first restaurant we could find to get a good meal – we were still obsessed with the thought of food. We greedily ordered a steak each and an ice cream sundae. We pounced on the food and began to devour it, but everyone soon slowed down and came to a stop. We couldn't eat another mouthful and stared sorrowfully at the unfinished meal. Our stomachs had shrunk so much, we just couldn't find room for the food!

We sailed on towards Sydney; the days became cooler as we went further south. Suddenly, a storm blew up. It got terrifyingly rough. Gradually everyone was sea sick, all except Dick, who was excitedly running about enjoying the fun! It seemed the ship would toss endlessly and I thought we would never reach land. But after a few hours, all was well. Sydney Bridge was in sight and we sailed gently into Sydney Harbour.

The next few hours were not pleasant ones and spoilt our first impression of Australia. Because of the White Australian policy, I suppose one couldn't entirely blame the Immigration officers, who were trying to do their duty. But I still maintain they could have been a little more polite in their handling of passengers.

We queued up for permission to land. Grace was ahead of me. She was greeted politely and was welcomed into Australia. Then, I was next, with a Chinese husband. "Do you realise that you are allowed to stay in Australia for only six months? You must also report to the authorities if you stay any longer," he warned gruffly.

"Don't worry," I replied, "We shan't stay a day longer than we have to". Our passports were then stamped.

We went on to the Customs. We were asked the usual questions and we assured them we had no contraband. In spite of this, we were ordered to empty our luggage on to the ground – all contents out of our two canvas holdalls – from the Red Cross! I'm afraid I felt angry and humiliated and I wished I had never set foot in Australia.

We were met by Pierre Layner and taken to his home in Sydney, which was near a bay. It was a small home. We met his French wife and two sons, Coco and Renée, who were smaller than our children. We were given a little room for the whole family.

Although, to be truthful, we were very grateful and touched to be invited by Layner, we were very disappointed to be placed into such cramped conditions. We were not able to find more suitable accommodation as prices were beyond us at the time. We felt rather trapped in this small house with two very undisciplined boys. However, we were determined to make the best of it. We made friends with Layner's wife and chatted with her in our broken French and her broken English.

One incident, which I thought the girls would never forget was that one day our three children went to a pier nearby. Dick was keen to do a little fishing, not that he'd done any before. He settled down with his hook, line and bait, while the girls wandered about nearby.

Soon, a young lad came up in a rowing boat and "chatted them up". Dick was too engrossed with his fishing to take much notice, but the girls were interested when the lad invited them to have a ride in his boat. This was not an experience to be missed. And, what an experience it was!

He rowed them around a little headland and on to a shore. There were some huts there and he helped the girls down "to explore". As soon as they came into a hut, he grabbed one of the girls and started to undress her. She struggled and screamed. He then started on the other, who did the same. I think it was only through the grace of God that he panicked and didn't force himself on them. I feel sure that if he had been an older man he would have raped and murdered them. It was their loud concerted screams which really panicked him.

So, he brought them back to the pier and threatened them to keep quiet about the incident. When Daphne and Wendy ran home with the frightening news, it was difficult to get the full story at first between their sobs. Dick, of course, didn't even know what had happened. From then on, we were very careful with our daughters. There was news of so many rape cases in Sydney at the time.

This rather horrified us as Chinese because, on the whole, we seldom hear of rape in Hong Kong. I think, probably, the old Chinese custom of having concubines often solved the problem of sex. Or, perhaps, Chinese, on the whole, are not such enormous meat eaters, or heavy drinkers; they are a gentler race. This is only my theory!

Well, as soon as K.C. was able to, he called on the representative of the Hong Kong Government and applied for his four years back pay. He was very delighted to receive the whole sum. We were absolutely overjoyed and never in our lives had we felt so rich – £4,000! We felt like millionaires. "Now, at last," I thought, "I can start to refurbish our home and buy some essential things to take back with us".

Of course, we told Layner our good news and said we would like to leave and see something of New South Wales and find a quiet place where we could recuperate. His secretary, a man who did quite a lot of bush walking suggested the Megalong Valley in the Blue Mountains. This sounded ideal, but, first of all, we booked a little bungalow by the sea for a month. This was in Newport.

We thanked the Layners and said good-bye, rather with some relief, though I felt a bit guilty to feel that.

Newport was only a little seaside town. But it was nice and quiet, which suited us, and the beach was safe, clean and sandy. I sighed with relief and felt, at last, I could relax in my own "home".

After a few days, I began to feel rather unwell. It got worse and worse. "I know it isn't 'flu. I feel much worse than that," I told K.C. Then, one night I was so very ill I had to wake him. I felt I was passing away and stepping "over the threshold". I pleaded with God, "Please, may I not die yet. The children are so very young, they still need me. Let me live and I'll promise to be good and do your Will!"

Well, in the meantime, K.C. had grabbed some brandy, (we always travel with a little bottle), and began pouring it neat straight into my mouth. In a little while, it brought me round and I fell into a fitful sleep.

Next morning, I awoke with my face in purple blotches. It was measles. K.C. called the doctor, who confirmed it. It is not a pleasant thing to have measles when one is passed thirty. My neck glands were so swollen that my neck was as wide as my head. It was very painful. This illness was long drawn out and left me very weak. The doctor suggested a nurse to come to help me. She was a God-send. Nan Spy was her name and she just took over. I could really let go now and leave the children to her, too. Not that they were any trouble, but to know there was another woman in the house to take charge during the day was a great relief.

My convalescence was slow. I could hardly walk. In fact, I felt I had to learn to walk again. But, slowly, I picked up. Nan Spy was really a gem. She washed and cooked for us, too. It was quite unnecessary, but so very welcome. We became firm friends and later wrote regularly to one another. She even visited us after we settled in England many, many years later. She got married and I'm afraid I have lost touch with her.

Very soon after we got down to Australia, we had a cable from Selwyn recalling K.C. back to work. I was rather cross about this and thought it was most unfair to recall K.C. back so soon when he had barely had a chance to recuperate. I used all my persuasive power to get K.C. to stay for the full term of leave he was entitled to. So, he replied that he did not feel ready or well enough, to return to work. I was relieved that nothing more was said about this matter. We stayed the full length of his leave until December.

While we were in Newport, Layner visited us. He had a purpose in mind. "K.C., since you are so well off now, would you do me a favour? I need a loan of £2,000 just for two weeks for a business deal. I shall pay you back in two weeks' time," he promised. "Certainly, Pierre, it's quite all right. You've been so kind to us, this is the least we can do to repay you." K.C. immediately got out his cheque book to write a cheque. "I shall give you a proper receipt when I get back to the office, in the meantime, I shall just write a little note to show I've received your cheque."

"Oh, it's all right, Pierre, I trust you." And so that was that. Layner then left. I hung on to the piece of paper, feeling a little more cautious than K.C.

But, as the days wore on and still we did not hear from him, I took it upon myself to approach him, "Pierre, I don't wish to rush you, but time is running out and it won't be too long before we are due to return to Hong Kong. Can you give us an idea when you can pay us back the loan?"

"Oh, don't worry, I won't run away with your money, you'll have it back before you leave. My negotiations are taking longer than expected," he assured us. Well, what could we do, but keep on waiting.

As soon as I was well enough, we decided to leave Newport and go on up towards the Blue Mountains. We stopped two nights at Katoomba and enjoyed the beautiful scenery. The "Seven Sisters" and "Orphan Rock" are scenes that stand out in the mind. It was so unusual to see these rocky mountain peaks rising up among the mists which drifted gently by.

We went on down the Megalong Valley towards Carlon's Farm. The train stopped four miles short of the farm and we had to make the rest of the journey on horseback and on foot. There were no motor roads there at the time. It was quite an exciting experience, especially for the children, who had never been on horseback before. There were squeals of excitement and delight.

Soon, we came to a little valley, which was Carlon's Farm. A little stream ran by. The house consisted of a low one-storey building with a porch, which ran right across the front. We entered the one main room, which had a gigantic fireplace, large enough to take almost half the trunk of a tree. On one side of the room was the dining table and chairs. There was very little furniture in the room and everything was rough and ready.

One bedroom, a very small one, led from the main room. In it was a double bed, a chair and a washstand with basin. The other bedroom was on the other side of the main room. The kitchen, which was quite small, led out from the dining area.

This was to be our home for the next six weeks. It seemed like heaven to us. Mrs Carlon, a tiny woman, barely five feet tall welcomed us in her very broad Australian accent. Mr Carlon, a great big burly man had already met us at the station.

There was no electricity and no running water. We had to get our water from the stream or wash in it, which the children loved doing, sometimes breaking the ice, which had formed over night. The cold weather was setting in with night frosts. But, it was lovely dry crisp weather.

The loo was about a hundred yards away at the back. It was literally "a hole in the ground", with cut up newspaper as toilet paper! I enjoyed reading the back issues of the Australian papers.

There wasn't much in the garden except a lovely large orange tree. It thrilled me to see actual oranges growing on it and to be able to pick a sweet juicy orange.

In this garden, Mrs Carlon kept bantam chickens. Two very special ones were called Victoria and Albert. They were very special birds and quite beautiful. There were also a few turkeys and a goose, or two. It wasn't really a farm as such, more of a small holding. No crops were grown, only a few vegetables.

As far as I can remember, there was only one milking cow. I remember so well how every so often, Mrs Carlon would say, "Where's Norbert?" No one would be able to find him anywhere until they came to the cow. Mr Carlon was supposed to be milking it but, he wasn't getting on very well because his head would be leaning up against the cow and propped up near him would be the newspaper. So that was why he took so long! The news was much more interesting than milking. He would be duly told off. I remember there were very few things Mr Carlon did except relax on the couch in the porch with his hat over his eyes.

The wild birds would be so tame they would come and perch on his feet. He could feed them by holding a piece of food in his mouth and the birds would hop along his legs and chest and take the food. He loved showing off his intimacy with the wild birds and we were duly impressed.

Mrs Carlon was just as at home with the birds. They knew and trusted her so well that they would fly right into the kitchen to feed on grated cheese. She would talk to them all as if they were her children. One or two birds, a thrush especially, would be a bit shy and he would make his presence known from outside by hitting his beak against a tree trunk. She would call out, "Don't be so impatient, you'll have your turn." Then, she'd take a special morsel out to him. What really thrilled us were the numbers and varieties of wild birds. They were so colourful, the parakeets and tits. Of course, there were the blackbirds and thrushes. Later, we saw a lyre bird displaying its plumage in a courtship dance in the "bush". We also heard the bell bird from time to time calling out in his bell-like voice. The Kookaborra's were the most amazing in their song, which must have given them their name. They would sing, "Cucoo, ka-ke, cucoo ka-ka".

Soon after I arrived, I had a nasty fall and injured my ankle very badly. I suppose I was still a little weak after the measles. Mr Carlon was around and I felt his strength when he picked me up as if I were a feather and put me on his horse to bring me home. The swelling was very bad and the pain worse. It left me incapacitated for weeks. But, I didn't mind as I could quite legitimately just sit and bask in the sunshine. The peace of the place was incredible. I just drank it all in.

While we were there, Mac Stanton visited the farm for his bush-walking holiday. Mac is an Englishman. He and his wife, Mildred, also English, settled in Australia many years ago. He was a Hansard reporter: a gentle man with an infinite patience with children. He took our children into his heart and gave them all his time and attention. He would take them for walks into the bush, teaching and showing them many interesting things of nature.

Some days he would take Dick on his own and they'd disappear for a whole day, taking their picnic lunch with them and a "billy can". This was a ritual with bush walkers – to make billy tea with a billy can. K.C. would sometimes join them in their walks. They would see kangaroos with their "Joeys", which really thrilled the children. Occasionally, there would be a rare glimpse of a sleepy Koala bear with her baby on her back.

Of course, the main trees in the bush were eucalyptus. There were very many varieties of them with different shades of grey-green. They were called "gum" trees by the Australians. They gave out a lovely tang of eucalyptus.

Unfortunately, during this period, the children came down with measles one by one. But, being young and in these surroundings, they soon recovered. Mrs Carlon, who did all the cooking, saw to it herself that we were all fed properly. "The children are too thin. We must put some flesh on them." So, out she would go and kill a turkey and we would have a feast. Then she would also try to get us to eat enormous turkey eggs. I had never eaten such a large egg. "Do you good," she said, standing over us to make sure we finished every scrap of it.

The children slept out in the porch in sleeping bags. It was great fun for them and very healthy. Gradually, the colour returned to their cheeks and they were bright and sparkly again. We couldn't have chosen a better place in the whole world to get over the privations of war.

We enrolled all three children in the Government Correspondence School. It was an ingenious way to give children, who were either moving about like ours, or others who lived out in remote areas, some education. Text books and notebooks were sent to them with instructions and homework. When they had finished one lot, it would be sent back and corrected, while another lot was sent on to the children. They were all very keen students and worked very hard and seemed quite up to standard for their age group. At least, we felt, they were getting *some* teaching and felt less guilty about taking them away from what should have been regular schooling.

In the evenings, we would all gather round the roaring log fire, most of us sitting on the floor – there weren't many easy chairs. This made it really homely and informal. We sang songs and were surprised that we and the Carlons knew similar ones.

After a while, we made a trip to see the famous Genolan Caves. We all piled on to the train after walking the four miles to the station. It was quite a memorable visit as none of us had ever seen such large caves with the stalactites and stalagmites in large luminous columns. There was a lake inside and some people went and rowed in a little boat. It was dark in there and I was fascinated and filled with awe and wonder at the beauty of creation. The children, too, were very impressed and I think that picture has stayed with them throughout their lives.

While we were near the caves, we came across a group of wallabies. They were like small kangaroos and jumped about just like their cousins.

Dick was invited by Mac Stanton to stay a while with him in his home in Mosman by the sea. So, when Mac left, he took Dick with him. It was the first time Dick was separated from us and, at first, he was a little hesitant about going. But, once there, he had a marvellous time and was thoroughly spoilt by the Stantons. They had a daughter, Margaret, older than Dick, and they became good friends. Dick had great admiration for Margaret!

It was getting near the time for us to leave Carlon's Farm. I was very sad about this. This had been the loveliest holiday I had ever spent and, even now, over forty years later, I can truthfully say it is still the holiday with the happiest and most carefree memories.

We heard of the mountain resort of Kosciusko and were determined to visit it, especially for the children as there would be a lot of snow. Snow is never seen in Hong Kong – even frosts are rare. So, off we went to Kosciusko. It was an entire change of scenery for everyone. One could be in Switzerland, the scenery was so similar. The children were very excited and touched and felt the snow, learning at once to play snowballs. Of course, Dick remembered everything about snow. He had seen it before in Switzerland when he was four, when he had tried on his first pair of skis. Daphne, being only two-and-a-half at the time, didn't remember much, I think.

Well, the sun was shining, the air bracing and I really felt my whole strength coming back to me. I lost the feeling of being a shrivelled old woman. I had put on weight and so had the children. They, too, looked more normal and less like skeletons.

Dick tried on his skis. He joined a class and took his first nursery slopes like a duck to water. As I mentioned before, he has never looked back. It was expensive in Kosciusko and I don't remember attempting any lessons, neither did K.C.

After this brief interlude, we just had to go back to Carlon's Farm for another week or two. From there, we went on to Crunulla, where we rented a little bungalow by Botany Bay, where Captain Cook is supposed to have landed. Once more, the children could enjoy the sandy beach.

I remember Charlie Wong coming to stay a few days with us. Charlie was "Miss Wong's" brother and we knew him well. Everything seemed very vague at this period, because over us hung the shadow of the loan we had made to Layner. Somehow, doubt was slowly creeping into our hearts and the two week's deadline was long past. We began to worry. We were too polite and embarrassed to remind Layner of his promise. However, we had to make our final preparations for the homeward journey.

The fact we were not going to get back our loan from Layner hit us full in the face. Due to all the worry of it, we felt physically sick in the stomach. K.C. began to lose his hair. It came out literally in handfuls and he became bald overnight.

Friends advised us to consult a solicitor, which we did. But it had a nasty affect on Layner, who became aggressive and threatening. He said he would report us to the authorities for smuggling goods out of Australia. I was shocked and frightened by his menacing behaviour.

All the "goods" we were taking out were things I had bought as soon as the money was available – practical things to start a home again and quite essential. They were things like mosquito nets (because of the danger of malaria in Hong Kong, we had to sleep under them), blankets, sheets, pillows, towels and quite a lot of knitting wool. I was a keen knitter and knitted all the woollies the children, K.C. and I wore. These things were placed in large cardboard boxes and stored in Layner's office.

In the end, we lost over £500 on solicitors' fees as Layner just declared bankruptcy and we never saw the money again.

CHAPTER 12

Voyage Home and Settling Down

Sadly, we set sail on a very tiny cargo ship back to Hong Kong. We considered ourselves lucky to get accommodation together – as a family. Passenger ships were still very scarce. Our ship could only hold twelve passengers and our family, therefore, consisted of almost half that number. I remember a middle-aged English couple who travelled with us. They were very kind to the children.

Our cabin was small and stuffy. The standard of cleanliness was far below what one would expect on a ship. Cockroaches and ants crawled about, but we made the best of it.

Half way between Sydney and Hong Kong, we met with a typhoon (a very bad storm in the Pacific). We tossed and we turned. The ship shuddered and twisted and dipped until we were nearly all sick. We were tossed about in our bunks and many times were nearly thrown out as if we were rag dolls.

Daphne was so sick she had convulsions and I had to rush her on deck to get some fresh air. The English couple took over and looked after her. K.C. often suggested a sip of brandy to help her relax at such times. According to the couple, they were sure Daphne enjoyed brandy. She kept on asking for the "nice medicine!"

K.C. was very sea sick indeed. He could not keep anything down. It was five days and K.C. became so dehydrated that the captain had to change course for him as we feared for his life.

Soon, things calmed down. The sun shone, K.C. was able to sip a little soup and everything returned to normal. We journeyed on until the early hours of one morning when we were in sight of Hong Kong, I hurried on to the deck. I shall never forget that dawn entrance as we neared Lyemun Pass (one of the two narrow entrances into Hong Kong harbour).

The colour of the landscape was gentle and muted. There was a slight mist. The sea was like glass. But, what struck me was the faint scent that wafted towards me – perhaps this was why Hong Kong was named "Fragrant Port".

The large junks with their enormous patched sails drifted by. They, too, were loaded with cargo. We squeezed through the narrow entrance and, at once, the harbour and the northern face of the island were in sight. The "busy-ness" of the place seemed to hit me. The Chinese are so industrious, they always seem to be doing something.

It was not long before we were tied up mid-stream. We were met by a Government Medical Department launch to take us to Kowloon, where our home was. We said our farewells to the English couple and the crew of the ship and clamoured down the swinging steps slung on the side of the ship. One at a time, we jumped on to the launch. We chugged our way to Kowloon Pier and a government car met us to take us back to Cumberland Road. The luggage was to follow later.

When we arrived home, our amahs were there to greet us, which was a pleasant sight. They would help me so much to settle down and re-organise my life. I couldn't help having a "sinking feeling". It seems I always feel a little "lost" at such times. But, somehow, we began to settle down.

I forgot to mention that in my keenness for farming, while we were in Australia, I came across a strain of chickens, which struck me as unusual. They were called Australops and were completely black and very large. They laid beautiful dark brown eggs. They also arrived. There was a part of the garden where we could easily put up a chicken run and they were kept there. Unfortunately, when we had to move away during a heat wave, we lost them all.

In mentioning my love of farming, I forgot to say that while in Australia, I heard of a pig farm, which was prepared to take in a novice to learn about pig farming. This was soon after we arrived and before I had the measles. I duly arrived at the pig farm, booked in at a hotel nearby and reported for work. After a day or two, the owner gave the other worker a holiday and I was left to carry on by myself. I have never worked so hard in my life before. I had the full responsibility of running the farm, which worried me. Some sows were having litters and it was a miracle I stayed alive! They were very protective of their young and, therefore, very aggressive. Each time I went in to clean the pen they would attack me. I learned to clear the fence very well. I had to carry buckets of skimmed milk, which was a by-product from a dairy nearby. The pigs were "large whites" and the owner said he was trying to breed them with an extra rib. They certainly looked very long! They were huge.

Now, to get back to Kowloon and Cumberland Road. We settled in fairly quickly. Arrangements were made immediately for the childrens' schooling. The girls went back to the Diocesan Girls' School. Dick went to the Boys' School.

CHAPTER 13

K.C.'s Promotion

K.C. reported back to work. Selwyn greeted him with, "So, you didn't want to come back when I sent for you. I had a good job for you as Acting Deputy Director of Health Services, but you didn't seem to want it," he teased. "However, Dr Graham Cumming has been kind enough to keep it warm for you!" Selwyn continued.

K.C. could hardly believe it. Chinese were seldom promoted to the higher jobs, so he was really elated. His foot was placed on the first rung of the ladder towards success. It had been Selwyn all along that had faith in K.C.'s abilities and integrity. K.C. did not let him down. From that day on, he devoted his whole life to his work. His diligence and honesty were outstanding.

During this period, K.C. also held the post of Deputy Chairman of the Urban Council. This was the beginning of his period of innumerable meetings, especially after work. We, as a family, saw less and less of him as his responsibilities grew. At the top of his career, I think K.C. was in twenty-five separate committees and chaired nearly all of them.

K.C. carried on as Acting Deputy Direct of Health Services for four months and still the post was not confirmed. This was rather unsettling as we felt anything could happen and he might lose the position.

So, one day, when I met the Governor of Hong Kong, Sir Alexander Grantham, I boldly went up to him and brought up the subject of K.C.'s promotion. He was surprised that the confirmation of K.C.'s post had not come through and promised me he would look into it. "I shall tie a knot in my handkerchief to remind me," he smiled and duly did so. We heard very shortly after this that the post had been confirmed and K.C. was definitely made Deputy Director of Health Services, receiving the same salary and house allowance as an expatriate for the first time. I felt justice had, at last, been done.

In the meantime, the two girls were working steadily at school; they were enjoying it and came home each day full of news of what had happened at school. They were conscientious students and worked very hard.

At this time, we found a nicer house in Suffolk Road, which was still in Kowloon Tong. It was opposite Grace's house, separated by a piece of waste ground where the soldiers had camped immediately after the war. The house faced south, which made it warm in winter and cool in the summer. It was brighter than the Cumberland Road house.

Of course, we never owned a house in Hong Kong. One had to be really wealthy to do so. Therefore, while K.C. was working, we rented our accommodation and the Government supplemented the rent. Our last home was a beautiful house, which went with his job.

CHAPTER 14

Dick's Education

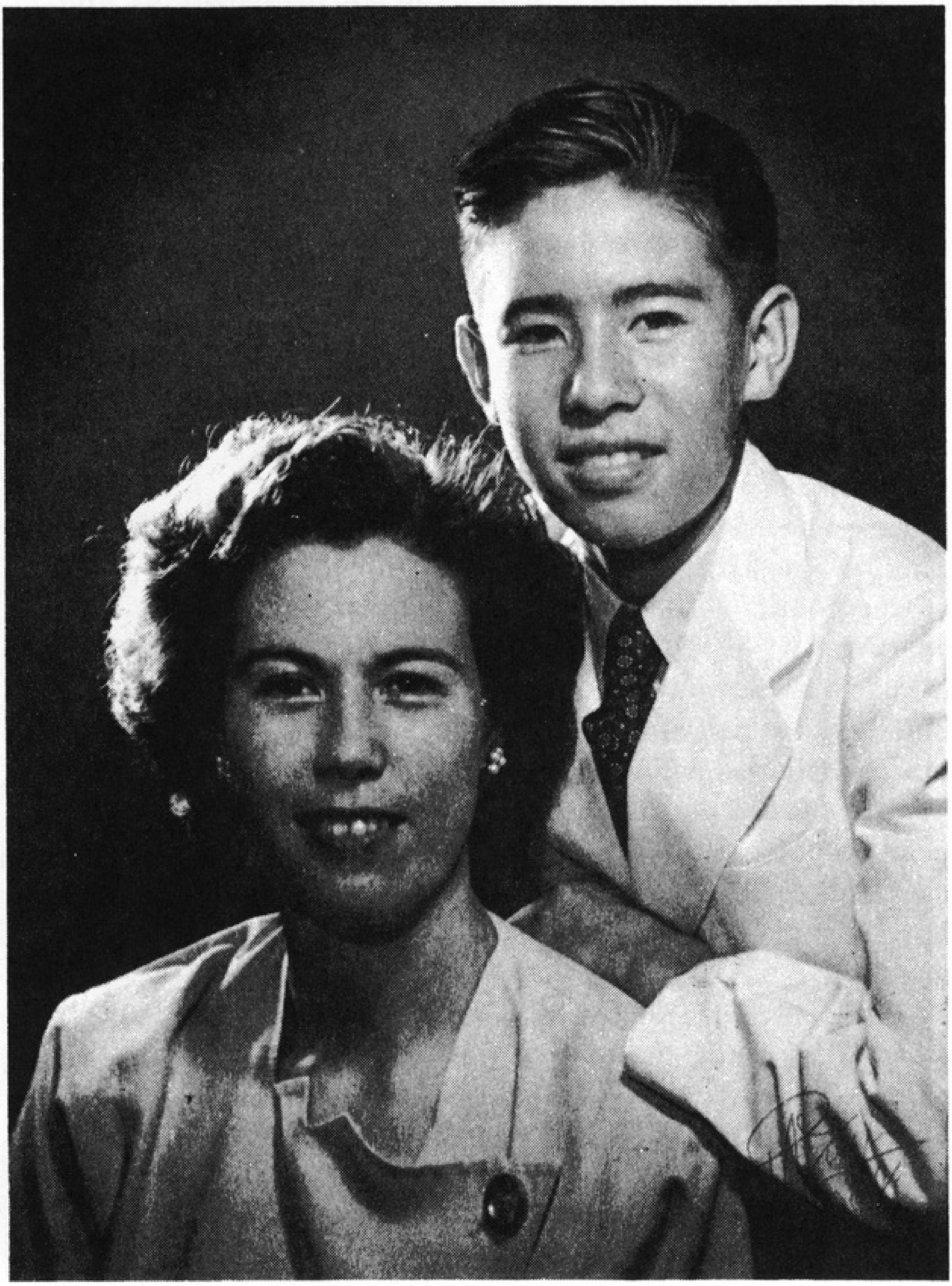
When Dick entered the Diocesan Boys' School, he was very disappointed because he was placed in a lower class than he had been in Wah Yan College and for a term he hardly did any work. He lost interest. I began to worry because it was not like him at all.

We noticed that many of the boys were not very suitable companions and were rather rough and uncouth. They came from newly-rich families and came to school brandishing their new found wealth with new bicycles and new cars. This gave Dick ideas, "Why can't I go to school on a nice new bicycle! Why can't I have such and such that so and so has?" This went on for a while and when we discovered that the school was still very disorganised we felt, perhaps, we must think of sending him abroad, that is if he was keen to go.

Dick was very keen indeed and, at once, began to study very hard, trying to make up for his lack of schooling for the four years he had lost during the war. He knew he had to make up in English, Maths., French and later in Latin, when we found the Public Schools in England required these subjects. He absorbed anything and everything he was taught and soon made up most of the work. He even found time to enjoy violin lessons.

We studied the syllabuses of various schools. I was very taken by the sound of a Quaker School, St. George's, in Harpenden, and made enquiries. I still dream about this school and whether Dick's life would have been different if he had gone there. But, it was only a dream for he has made a success of his life.

At the last moment, our plans were changed as K.C.'s secretary, Mr Barnes, said to him, "Dr Yeo, since you have decided to send Dick to school in the U.K., why don't you send him to King's College in Taunton, instead. My sons are going soon, then they could travel together and my wife will keep an eye on Dick. He will be less lonely." We knew this was the sensible thing to do, so we accepted his offer.



Dick at fourteen just before he left for school in England (1949)

So, the decision was made. We applied to King's College, which accepted Dick on condition he could catch up on his school work and reach the required standard in eighteen months, which he did. I had to make preparations and get ready the list of things which the school required. We carefully bought each item as money was still a problem but we felt it was worth making the sacrifice to give Dick the chance he was wanting. His main ambition, since he was nine, was to become a surgeon! The least we could do was to help him on his way.

Our financial problems were by no means over. With Horace's (Grace's husband) advice, we fought on trying to retrieve the loan we made to Layner. We didn't have any more money to do this, so Horace, who was so sure we could win the case, gave us a loan of H.K.$2,000 to fight it. "Take your time to repay me and don't worry about it," he said. We thanked him gratefully. But it was money down the drain and we spent ages paying Horace back.

The greatest shock was to come. The Hong Kong Government said it was all a mistake K.C. getting the full four years' back pay. He was only entitled to half the amount since he hadn't been interned. I felt this was grossly unfair as K.C. had not just sat in an internment camp. He had worked on under instructions from the British Government on a starvation diet. But it was no use appealing. "I can't pay you back as we've used it to refurnish our home," K.C. told them. "Then, we shall deduct $25 a month from your salary from now on until you have repaid the full £2,000!" It took us years to do this. It made me quite sick.

K.C.'s salary was very low. It had not been raised on a level with inflation and times were, indeed, hard for us. Horace tried to persuade K.C. to leave the Government and start private practice. But K.C. felt he should hang on in spite of the fact he was only earning in a month what a G.P. was taking in one day. Private practice was very lucrative. He was never very practical: his ideals came first. "Public Health has always been my line and I have been in the Government for so long I can't desert now."

So, he hung on. It was not easy to see his contemporaries being able to afford things I wished we could have had.

While we were living in Suffolk Road, Dick's school fees went up so I had to find work to supplement the increase. All the children's fees and school books, etc. in the U.K. and in Hong Kong had to be paid for. There was no free education or grants for students in Hong Kong. Besides teaching, I did some coaching, mainly for those wishing to learn English as they had started their education in a Chinese school and were finding difficulty adjusting to English. I also taught young children to read. This was very rewarding but it was hard work and tiring.

Picniking with some of my school children on Lion Rock (1948)

I remember having to carry on even when I was ill in bed as I couldn't afford to miss the coaching fees coming in. We economised as much as possible.

It had all been worth it in that Dick did not fail us, but got through all his exams, gaining credits in all the nine subjects he took and an entrance into Cambridge. The school was duly proud of him and must have felt it was worth giving him a chance when he first entered.

Dick was the first Hong Kong boy in that school to have been made a prefect and from that time on Hong Kong boys were always welcome there. His two cousins soon came after him and they later gained places in Oxford. One is now a barrister and the other a solicitor and they are taking their places in the political life of Hong Kong.

CHAPTER 15

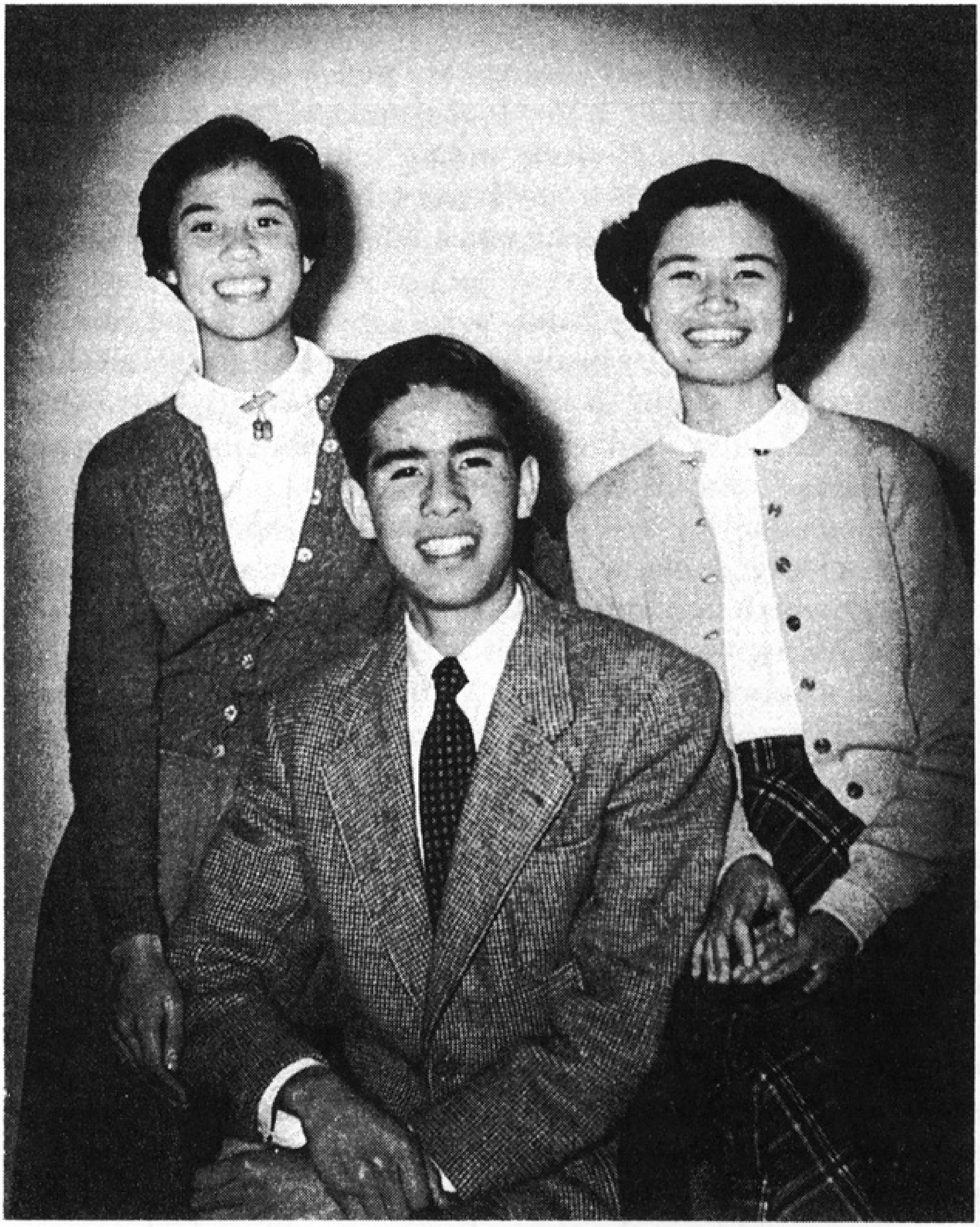
Daphne and Wendy's Education

Daphne and Wendy were doing very well at school. They were showing signs of their individual development. Daphne was more keen on the "Modern stream", in which she learned Domestic Science and secretarial work. She seemed very happy and did well in her field. She was made prefect during the last two years of school.

Wendy, on the other hand, was a bit of a mixture. She was developing a love of drawing and painting. Although all three of our children could draw well, I found Wendy's drawings always a little different. Her approach was more interesting and the pictures "came alive".

Though she was artistic, Wendy showed ability and interest in the science subjects. She was placed in the "Academic stream", which led her on to the Hong Kong University eventually. She was also good at athletics and once won all the prizes on a Sports Day, being the Victrix Ludorum. She also had dreams of becoming a paediatrician, but later on one of my sisters discouraged her. She said, "To become a doctor, you have to make the choice of giving your whole life up to your work and not to get married and have a family. The two don't work together, Wendy." So, Wendy, who intended to have twelve children of her own, decided definitely to give up the thought of medicine as a career!

Later on, after she got through her final exams at school, she entered the Hong Kong University to read Architecture as this seemed nearest to art. On the other hand, Daphne prepared to start work. She was not keen to go to university. I tried to persuade her to try for a B.A. as she was good in English. "At least you would have the taste of university life, which is quite different from school. It is a chance of a life time." She couldn't be persuaded and preferred to be independent. I suppose she felt we had been economising so much she didn't want to be an extra burden to us. So she found a job.



The fledgelings about to leave the nest.

CHAPTER 16

K.C.'s United Nations Travelling Fellowship and Our Further Travels

In the middle of the children's schooling, that is, in January, 1949, K.C. was, once again, given long leave. This was to be a very long one as he was given an UNESCO Fellowship for six months and, coupled with his accumulated leave from the war years, he was to be away until May, 1950. The Fellowship enabled him to travel and visit the modern hospitals in Britain – Queen Elizabeth, Birmingham, being one of them, and then to spend six months in Canada to study the health problems there and, at the same time, to visit some of the well known hospitals. We all travelled again to England, this time by 'flying boat' (a Sunderland). It was very thrilling for us. I had never flown before so I was very excited, so were the girls. It took us five days altogether, making night stops, of course, always on water. What worried me most was the time we flew across India from Calcutta to Karachi – I wondered what would happen if we had engine trouble – where would we land?!

Our last stop was in St Augusta, Sicily, where I can still remember we embarked one glorious dawn. It was the most beautiful sunrise I had ever seen.

We finally reached Southampton. I was delighted to be able to see Dick again and to visit his school. He was now sixteen, Daphne was fourteen and Wendy twelve.

The children looked very striking at that age. The girls were particularly attractive in their pigtails. When we all trooped in together for a meal in the hotels, heads turned! I suppose it's rare to see a family with three children so close in age and Chinese looking at that.

We stayed for a little while with our friends, the Showells. It was the second time we were together. Their two daughters and ours got on very well and they had some good times together.

In return for their hospitality, K.C. took the whole family to Switzerland for two weeks during the summer holiday. We stayed in a family hotel in Spiez and we all enjoyed ourselves. We travelled the country in two cars and fell in love with the spectacular scenery.

After the holidays we felt that, since K.C.'s leave was to be so long, we must find a school for Daphne and Wendy. I wanted a school which was not too strict and in the country, if possible. The girls still showed signs of the war in that they were very serious and not as carefree as children should be. It had to be a school which needed no uniforms as they were only to be there for a short time and uniforms were expensive.

We found the ideal school – Dartington Hall, in Devon. It was a lovely place with about four thousand acres near the river Dart. The buildings were spacious. The school prided itself in music, ballet and other arts and crafts. It seemed ideal.

We were interviewed by the Head, Mr. Curry. I remember that, instead of interviewing the girls, he questioned me. He asked me various leading questions on how I brought up my children, how I dealt with the question of sex education, etc. I seemed to have passed the test as later he offered me a job as House Mother! I was very honoured indeed, as the school was known to be very progressive. Much as I was tempted, because I felt it would help out with school fees, I resisted the temptation. "It would cramp the girls' style," I thought. "They wouldn't like their mother looking over their shoulders." I wanted them to be entirely free to develop in their own way.

"This is the school," we decided. The girls were delighted and very excited about the prospect.

While we were in England during this leave, I registered in a secretarial course at the London School of Secretaries in Queen's Gate. It was a very intensive course and quite strenuous. I was quite a "Granny" in the class as I was in my thirties, while the other girls were in their late teens and very early twenties.

However, I made up by my steadiness of work and accuracy for my lack of speed and, in the end, got on with my touch typing faster than the others. I had just finished my shorthand theory and was going on to speed, when I felt that since K.C. was shortly leaving for Canada, I should try to see more of Dick in Taunton before we finally left for Hong Kong. It would be three or four years before I would be able to see him again. So, I gave up my secretarial course and went down to Taunton.

K.C. left for Canada. He would be away for six months. It was the first time we were parted for so long. It seemed very strange indeed, and I felt quite lost.

With all three children in private boarding schools, we really felt the pinch and, once again, I had to think of every penny. I found a room with a family, where I was provided with bed and breakfast, in Taunton. In the end, she did provide a hot mid-day meal, which was helpful and cheaper than I could get outside. Also in the evening, she left me an egg and bread and butter to prepare myself. She preferred me out of the house during the day, so I registered for as many courses as I could.

I felt I should continue with my secretarial training locally, though this was not up to the standard of the London course. The teacher was very slack. This was at evening school in the local Council buildings. Then, to fill in the time, I learned dressmaking and embroidery – all very useful courses.

During my secretarial training, I met a young friend, Ruth Howe. She was a lovely girl and had a very motherly mother. They happened to live opposite my landlady, so many evenings I would nip over to Ruth's. Her mother would "feed me up". It was so homely and I loved going over. She always had cats around and a lovely Chow dog. Ruth and I still exchange Christmas letters. She and her mother were very kind to Dick and his cousins all through their school days. Ruth is now a Deaconess.

While I was in Taunton that winter term, I was able to see Dick twice a week. On Wednesday afternoons, I took him out for tea; on Saturday afternoons, we would meet up and do something together. It wasn't quite like having a home for him to come back to, but it was better than nothing. At least, I was able to see something of him.

Enjoying the daffodils together at Dartington

Unfortunately, although I had a car, I couldn't use it because of petrol rationing and we had to save up the coupons for the break up of term to drive Dick down to pick up the girls in Dartington and then drive them all to London to meet up with Grace, who was in London at the time.

Dick and I did manage a trip or two to visit the girls in Dartington during the half term breaks. It was always a happy occasion as the atmosphere was carefree and I could see the girls blossoming. Wendy took part in gymnastics. She also enjoyed pottery. Once, she had blocked her room basin and I said, "Oh dear, how are you going to wash?" She laughed, "It's all right, I don't have to!"

We were shown the grounds and in spring the sight of the crocuses really thrilled me. There were drifts and drifts of pale mauve and dark mauve on the front lawn. Truly a sight never to be forgotten and the sight of wild daffodils blowing about in the spring breeze added to the glorious picture.

Daphne was fond of book-binding and showed me her work, which was most professional. She seemed so happy and confident. The girls were housed in separate houses, which I thought was such a good idea as they were able to develop in their different ways and make their own friends.

Boys also shared the same house as girls – all in all, it was just like family units. Had I accepted the offer of the job, I would have been in charge of one of these "families".

The children were also allowed to camp out beside the river occasionally, if the weather permitted. This was a highlight and a great novelty with the girls, who had never experienced camp life before. In Hong Kong, we were not able to camp for fear of malaria. The girls enjoyed almost four terms in Dartington.

K.C. returned from Canada and we were happy to see him again. He had a lot to record on his trip and my secretarial training came in handy. With my little travelling typewriter, I was able to help him make a report of his travels in Canada. It was all very interesting.

He started from Halifax, Nova Scotia, and worked his way right through to Vancouver. He was met and shown around hospitals and health clinics all over the country. Everyone was very kind. In Winnipeg, he met with very severe weather. He said it was so freezing cold he nearly lost his ears with frost-bite and had to rush into a shop to thaw them out. In the end, he had to resort to ear muffs!

When he was in Vancouver, he was able to visit our very good friend, Irene Lee. She was an old classmate of mine and was my bridesmaid. He stayed with her and her family. He stayed longer than expected as the snow storms stopped all the trains from running.

Now that K.C. was back in the U.K., it was time for us to return home to Hong Kong. My heart sank at the thought of leaving Dick for three or four years. I hate good-byes of any sort, so it was not a happy thought to be saying good-bye and miss his interesting teenage years.

CHAPTER 17

Return to Hong Kong and Our Last Home

It was now April, 1950 and we had returned to Hong Kong. On the first of this month, K.C.'s birthday, he was promoted to the post of Deputy Director of Medical and Health Services. He was truly in line for the very top job as Director. His work took up all his time and I was left to cope with the domestic problems and social arrangements that went with it.

I tried conscientiously to be a mother to my daughters and to be home to greet them when they came back from school. But it was a very busy time for me as I was still teaching and our official social life was mounting up.

We had moved up to the Peak to a lovely house, which went with the job. This made the journey to school very much more difficult. I had to drive the girls down to the Star Ferry, where they had to cross the harbour and then make their way to school by bus. Then, in the afternoon, I had to fetch them and then later to pick K.C. up from his office. I did the journey so many times a day that I'm sure I could almost have negotiated the hairpin turns blind-folded! I think the car must have known its own way up and down.

We were very lucky to get these lovely government quarters. It was a spacious three bedroomed house with a handsome wide staircase up from the big hall. There were two reception rooms and a study downstairs with parquet flooring throughout. A wide verandah on the south side led on to the garden from which we had the most wonderful views of the bays and islands around Aberdeen and from the other side through an archway of bamboo shrubs, we could see the harbour. On a dark night, the harbour was bejewelled with coloured lights from the town below and from Kowloon across the harbour, and the criss-crossing of the lit up ferry boats, stationary cargo and passenger liners and the occasional naval ship, would flicker and twinkle as if they were placed on black velvet. This is a sight I shall remember as long as I live; I have never found any other view to match it.

The garden wasn't large. We had a hedge of poinsettias opposite the front entrance. The south side consisted only of a small lawn so as not to hide the fantastic view of the islands and the sea. On the east side was a sunken garden, walled on one side to protect it from the cold easterly winds, which blew in the winter. There was a conservatory/greenhouse, which led on to the moon gate – a lovely feature to hide the kitchen side of the house.

In the sunken garden slopes grew lovely blue hydrangeas, which were magnificent in the summer, revelling in the misty atmosphere. I have never seen such wonderfully blue hydrangeas before or since. I always planted sweet peas against the wall, which faced south. This gave a magnificent display each winter.

The house was beautifully situated. Being on Magazine Gap, it was half way up the Peak and low enough to escape the fogs and mists, which enshrouded the higher levels and yet high enough to be nice and cool in the stifling and humid summer months. It was truly a Shangri-la as many of our friends observed.

We had two amahs. One to do the cooking and cleaning of the downstairs and the other was in charge of the upstairs rooms, as well as the washing and ironing. It was a large house and they managed well. It wasn't easy, especially in the hot and humid days. They had nice quarters at the back of the house facing the harbour, with separate washing and cooking facilities, although they cooked in our kitchen as we provided the food.

We also had a young lad who kept the car and outside of the house clean. We had a part-time gardener.

Altogether, I managed to run the household fairly well. Others in the same category as K.C. had twice as many servants. There was a lot of entertaining to be done, but I felt if I kept things simple and helped out as much as I had the time for, we would manage and we did.

By now, since K.C. had so many staff under him, doctors, dentists, nurses, health officers, etc., we felt it was important for him to get to know them. We conscientiously entertained them. I made a point of learning their names and visiting the wives when they were ill in hospital. In this way, we gained their loyalty and respect and the department worked together as a unit. We also had to entertain other departmental heads and their deputies and we became good friends, often having to meet at official functions.

Another group of people K.C. felt obliged to entertain were passing members of institutions like World Health Organisation and UNESCO and Red Cross, etc. Most of the expense came out of K.C.'s purse, though nowadays government servants have very large entertainment allowances.

I also felt obliged to do some charitable work because I didn't wish to waste time on bridge and mah jong, as many bored wives used to do. My favourite charity was Family Planning and I spent time in clinics helping out with the poor. It was quite an experience and I learned how the very poor managed, often living in terrible conditions, e.g. under stairways and on flat roof tops, besides those living in huts on the hillside. What struck me was their dignity and cleanliness – there was so much to learn from these people.

During this period, K.C. had to make several trips away on official business. He attended a conference in Saigon and evidently enjoyed it, finding time to visit AngKor Vat. He was fascinated by the ancient ruins and thought the people there were charming, especially the colourful clothes the ladies wore, their black teeth (from chewing raw areca nuts) and their unusual dancing.

K.C. also attended an important meeting in Manila while he was the Acting Director of Medical and Health Services. He represented Great Britain in the World Health Organisation Conference. It was a testing time for him and I think he conducted himself with great dignity and ability.

When he attended another conference in Singapore, he took me with him. It gave us a chance to meet up with some of his family. It was a tight schedule and I remember feeling very tired and under stress. On the way back to Hong Kong, we travelled on a brand new Italian ship, one of the Lloyd Tristino Lines. We met up with a horrific typhoon. The Italians were not particularly good, or disciplined at sea and it seemed the radio officer had read the message incorrectly. Instead of avoiding the typhoon, we sailed straight into it!

What an experience! There were no storm rails on the bunks, so we had to brace ourselves all night while the ship tossed. We heard sounds of crashing everywhere, especially in our cabin. Bottles flew this way and that, but, worst of all, the crashing came from the bathroom. My poor orchids; there were about a dozen very precious plants in terracotta pots that I was taking home with me! They were in a complete mess. Pots were broken, plants were tossed about with bare roots showing – my heart ached.

What was most frightening of all was the heavy furniture in the staterooms slithering and sliding everywhere. The ship had no means of chaining them to the floor. Most sea-going ships had means of securing heavy furniture. In the end, the sofas and chairs had to be tied by ropes to the pillars. The sailors ran about, green with apprehension, which added to the passengers' dismay. I vowed I would never again sail in an Italian ship! How glad we were when we eventually arrived back into the sanctuary of Hong Kong harbour.

In July, 1951, K.C. became an official member of the Legislative Council. He was involved with Health Law-making and contributed much towards keeping the Colony free from the dreaded tropical diseases and epidemics. Often, he would have to appear before the Executive Council and withstand cross examinations, while he fought again and again for a larger budget to improve his department. He often came home tired and drained.

Being in charge of so large a department in a place like Hong Kong, K.C. had a great deal of worry and responsibility. There were tricky problems to be solved. These often kept him awake at night. Often he would bring his work home, a habit to which I strongly objected, especially when he was ill and confined to bed. He would work even at weekends.

Eventually, I persuaded K.C. to try to keep his weekends free for his family. He tried his best, but it wasn't easy for him. Besides his work, there were many official functions to attend. This took much of our spare time. Often I would rebel against the situation and felt it was all a complete waste of time! Some people loved the life – so much of it was in the public eye.

CHAPTER 18

K.C.'s Final Promotion: Father's 90th Birthday Celebrations

Activity stepped up yet again when K.C. was promoted to the very top job of Director of Medical and Health Services in January, 1952. He also became part-time Professor of Preventive Medicine in the Hong Kong University, and was made Official Justice of Peace in connection with his work. Of course, responsibilities mounted, as did the social commitments, many of which were in celebration of his promotion. The Chinese community, especially the doctors, were very proud of him. He was the very first Chinese to hold this top job. (Previous to this, all Heads of Departments were British). So, each section of the Chinese community feted him, e.g. the Chinese Medical Association, the Chinese nurses, the "Yeo clan", etc. This went on for weeks. It wore us out.

K.C.'s health was suffering from overwork and eating too much rich food. Often he would have tummy upsets and this caused him to lose weight. Once he went down with amoebic dysentery and had to go to hospital. After a few days, he discharged himself because, he said, the treatment was worse than the disease! Somehow, he recovered, but it left him weak and thin. It was sheer determination that enabled him to carry on with his work. But I was always worried about him.

It mattered to me very much that he would succeed. We both felt he was on trial. It was imperative for him to do well and not let the Chinese community down. He didn't.

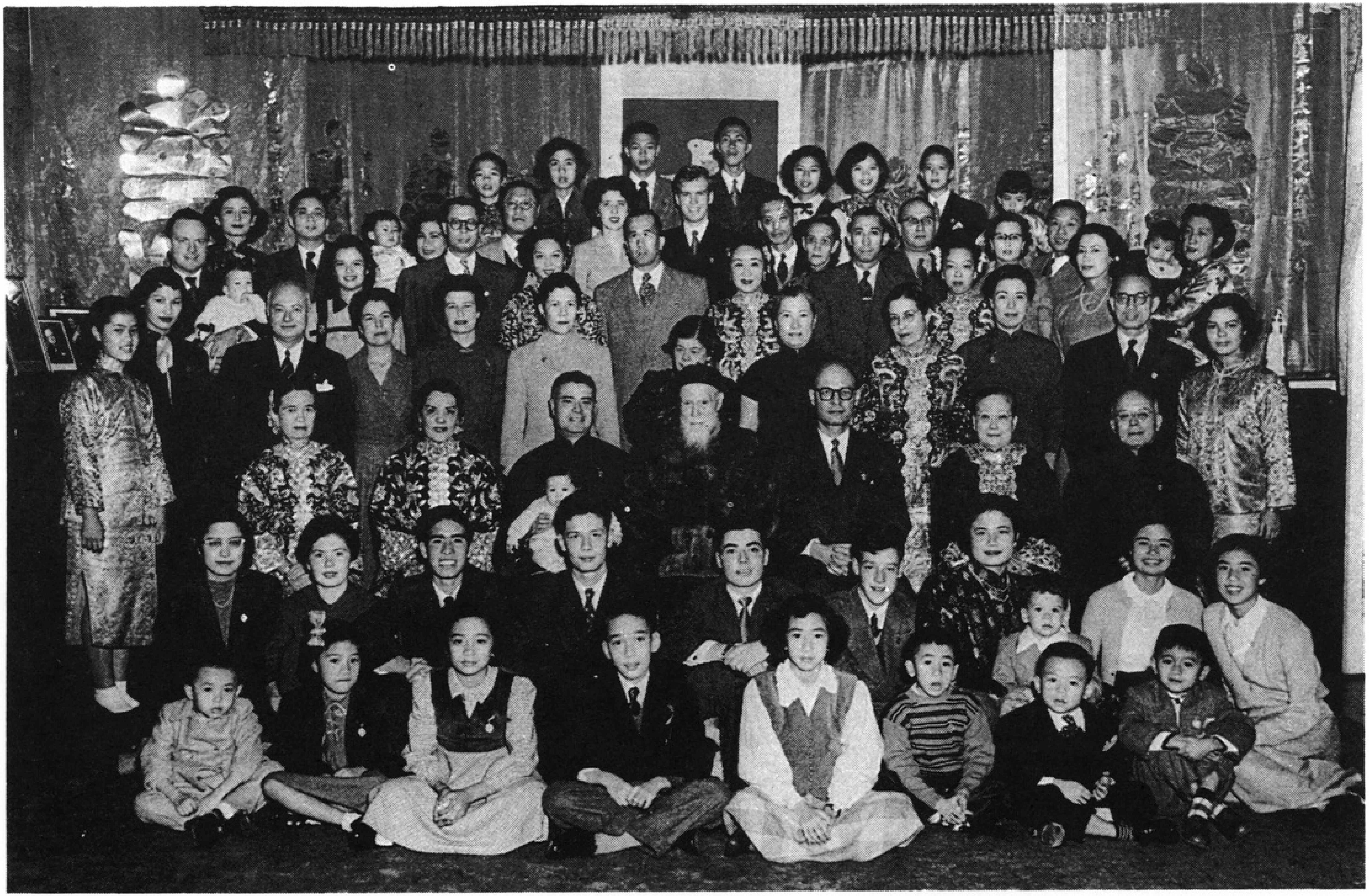
During this year, Daphne obtained her School Leaving Certificate and the following year the Pitmans Secretarial Diploma. Dick also gained entrance into Downing College, Cambridge, to read medicine. This was another landmark for

K.C. opening an exhibition during Pharmacy Week (1952) our family. I felt, with all this success, it made up in some way for my own poor start. I was so proud of my husband and my children.

In December, 1952, Father celebrated his ninetieth birthday. It was a great event within the family. Having had poor health most of his life, it was amazing that he reached this great age. So, being a wealthy man and feeling generous, he decided to invite the whole family back home. He paid all their passages. Everyone came, from all parts of the world; Australia, America and England. Dick had an unexpected free trip home!

We all sat down for a family portrait, that is, the immediate family, and there were seventy of us altogether! It was quite a photograph! Most of the married women wore the Chinese wedding ceremonial costume of a black jacket and bright scarlet pleated skirt, both intricately embroidered with silver, gold and coloured thread. They were colourful and exquisite. I often

Family group at our home (from Jean's book)



The immediate family at Father's 90th birthday (1952), all seventy of us!

regretted not being given one – one of the times I felt I was being left out!

Father's town house was packed with relatives and friends, who had come to wish him well. Flower baskets decorated the hall and anywhere there was room for them. Long silk banners and scrolls were hung from the ceiling and decorated the walls. On them were written in best Chinese calligraphy verses extolling his virtues.

There were days and days of festivities. The family got to know one another when we took turns to entertain each other. The immediate family were invited to our home in Magazine Gap and we had a wonderful time together. The young cousins had a lot to talk about. It was lovely watching them exchange news. It was also fascinating to observe the different likenesses one to the other, both in looks and mannerisms.

We soon came down to earth for it was almost time for Dick to go back to England. We were very grateful we had had a glimpse of him, which broke up the three-year interval of parting.

Wendy, Dick and Daphne during Dick's visit home in 1952.

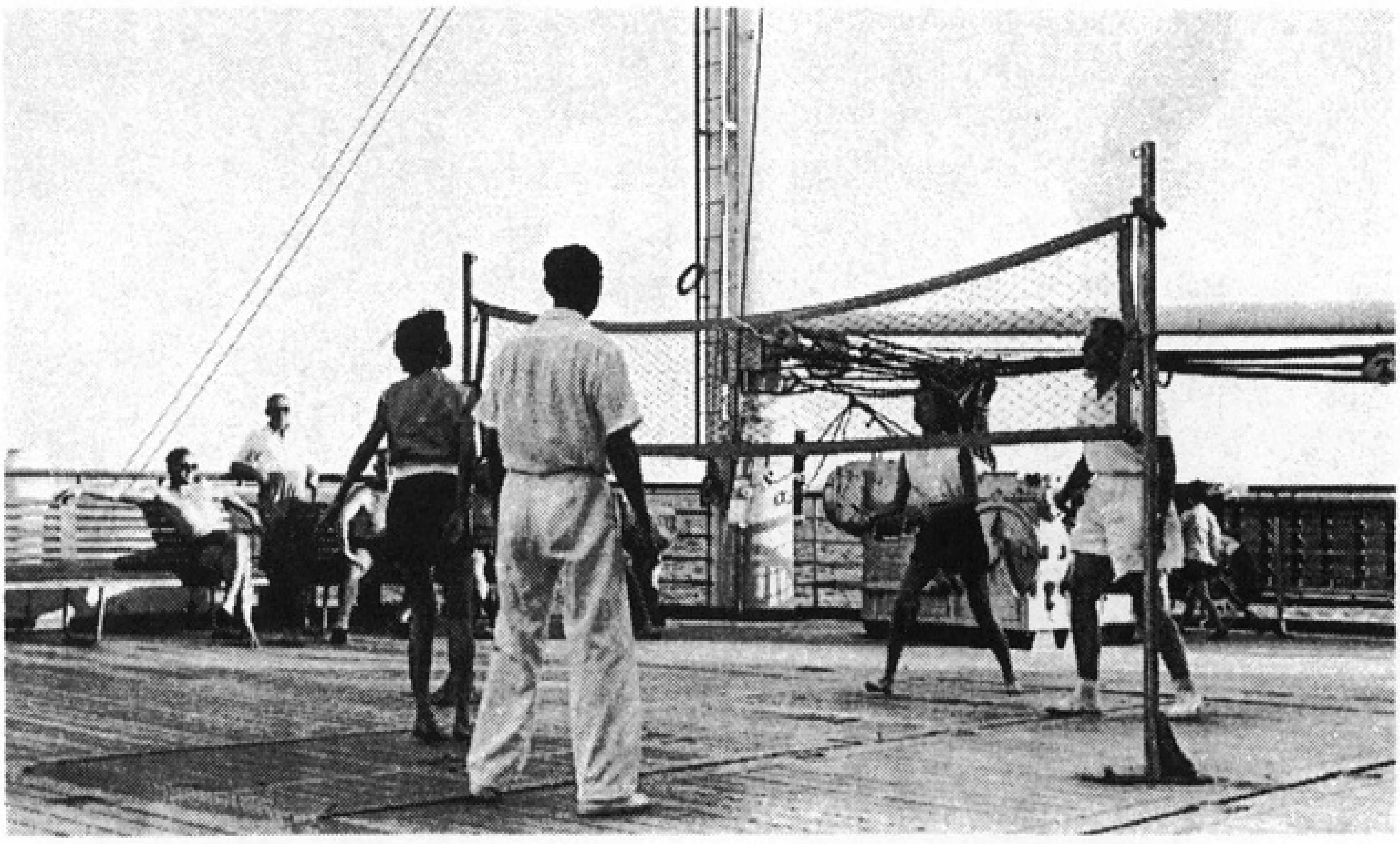
A moment together at our home in Magazine Gap.

CHAPTER 19

K.C.'s Last Leave to the U.K. and World Health Organisation Travelling Fellowship

It didn't seem too long before June, 1953, when we once again made preparations for K.C.'s leave. Wendy still had her A-Levels to take and while in England she went for coaching lessons at Davis's in London, which got her through the Science subjects she was aiming for.

During the summer holidays, we all went up to Scotland again. It was a lovely holiday we had together as one family. The children were all so grown up and attractive. They were good company too. It would be the last time we were all to be on holiday together.



K.C. and the girls playing deck tennis on our trip to England (1953)

Daphne registered at St Godric's Secretarial College for a refresher course. Dick, on the other hand, went over to Norway, Sweden and Denmark with us. He was now twenty years old and had learned to drive. This was during the Christmas holidays and the days were very short.

We were going to the Scandinavian countries because K.C. had been given a World Health Organisation Travelling Fellowship. He was planning to build a one thousand bed hospital in Kowloon. He, therefore, welcomed the opportunity to gather as much information and ideas as possible from other countries and to adapt them to his own hospital. When the building was completed (after K.C.'s retirement), it was named "Queen Elizabeth Hospital" and was opened by Prince Philip.

Luckily, the roads were not too bad in Norway and Sweden as it was a bad time of the year to go. It had begun to snow and often the roads were really icy. We had no skid chains. Often the doctors he met and interviewed would shake their heads at such foolishness. But we weren't going to buy skid chains just for one journey. They were no use to us in Hong Kong. We were lucky that Dick was able to take turns with the driving.

We had appointments to keep from one city to the next, which was quite harassing and often meant travelling long distances in the dark. We saw some fantastically modern and well run hospitals, especially in Sweden. In one of them, we travelled on scooters while inspecting the kitchen which was so large. Everything was spotless and most things were in stainless steel.

We also visited the laboratories. They kept mice called "Hula mice" as they were bred almost bald, except for a "skirt" of fur round their waists. This enabled the scientists to find the veins easily for injections. I shuddered at the thought of what all this meant to the animals.

It was nearing Christmas and one night at a hotel we were awakened by singing and quite an apparition came into our room. Three young girls with flaxen hair drifted in, in long white gowns. The central one wore a crown of lighted candles. It was beautiful. They stood at the foot of our beds and sang carols in Norwegian!

Dick was also awakened in this way. He thought he was dreaming! "I wish they had stayed on," he said, "weren't they beautiful!"

We must have travelled well over a thousand miles in those two weeks. Driving in Denmark was easier and the days were a little longer. It was a pity we had to do all this in winter as I saw hardly anything of the countryside. It was done so quickly I can't remember much of the cities we passed through.

We had made arrangements to meet Daphne and Wendy in France. They were to travel over with Shirley (Grace's daughter) and our friends, the Brockingtons. Fraser Brockington was at Cambridge with K.C. They had become great friends and together they had gone on a month's walking tour in Austria with a guide. Their knapsacks were filled with books, besides their personal belongings. At that time, both were preparing for their final exams for the Diploma in Public

K.C. greeting Brockington in Kai Tak Airport (1975).

Ann Brockington, Shirley, Daphne and Wendy in Villars (1954).

Health. Both came through with high honours. As they walked the Austrian mountains, they would pump one another with questions.

"Brock's" life had paralleled K.C.'s He had also married and had a family, and became a Medical Officer of Health and finally Professor of Preventive Medicine in Manchester University.

So, while we were still in England, the two old friends had planned another skiing holiday. We shared a chalet on the Swiss Alps near Villars. It was a quiet little place outside the village. We squeezed in. Shirley, our two girls and Ann, Brock's daughter, used the attic room. They were almost frozen.

Soon the leave was over and we had to say good-bye to Dick yet again. The time seemed to have flown. We travelled home in a twelve-passenger cargo ship to Hong Kong. What a difference this ship was compared to the old tub we were in when we travelled from Australia to Hong Kong when we met the typhoon. This ship was spotless, the food good and the service excellent. The cabin crew were Chinese and they took care of us well. Our cabin was like an ordinary room with windows instead of port holes. I think I enjoyed this trip more than any of the others in large liners.

CHAPTER 20

Back in Hong Kong. The Children's Careers

We arrived home in March, 1954, and K.C. was thrown straight into work. I tried to settle the family as best I could. Daphne started work as a secretary to the Professor of Gynaecology and Obstetrics in Queen Mary Hospital. She was very happy there for two years. The hospital was situated in the part of the island where we spent the last years of the war, so it was away from the town and had lovely views. Of course, in Hong Kong, as soon as one gets above town level, one never fails to find a lovely view.

Daphne found the other members of the staff and young doctors kind and pleasant. She was even allowed to watch a few operations but, she had difficulties with her "boss" because he was so very elusive. Often she would have to run after him to give him telephone messages, or get instructions from him for further work.

Wendy, on the other hand, entered the Hong Kong University to study Architecture. She enjoyed University life and made many friends. She took an active part in athletics, winning many of the prizes on the annual Sports Day. She continued with her painting (water colours) in her spare time and joined the Hong Kong Amateur Art Society.

I took a lot of interest in her work from the beginning and felt she showed great promise. Irene had a friend, Madeleine Pearson, who was an artist and when I got to know her I showed her Wendy's work with pride. She didn't seem very enthusiastic and said politely that she thought Wendy was a good draughtsman.

However, I wasn't discouraged, although I was naturally disappointed. Wendy continued to paint. There was no stopping

Wendy with prizes after Sports Day (1955).

her. She spent all her spare time painting. She entered some paintings in the local art exhibition a few months later and Madeleine was one of the judges. As soon as she saw Wendy's paintings, she rushed into Irene's office and said, "That niece of yours, she's got talent. Her paintings are lovely and show great promise." She was really excited and contacted me. "What are you doing about her future? Is she getting any tuition?" "No," I said, "Wendy has never had any art lessons and now she has started her course at the Hong Kong University in architecture."

"What a waste – architecture is not right for her. She must be sent to England to an Art College."

"We can't do that," I replied, "She must get a degree to enable her to earn a living. I missed out on this and know the disadvantages when getting a job. How can she earn a living as an artist?"

But Madeleine did not leave us alone. She went on and on every time she had an opportunity. So, in the end, we said to her, "If you can suggest the best college there is in England and if she can get in, we'll let her go." So, she told us about the Slade School of Fine Art of the London University. We applied for her and Wendy was to send her work over. She had begun to paint in oils, so we rolled one of her canvases up with some water colours and posted them to the Slade.

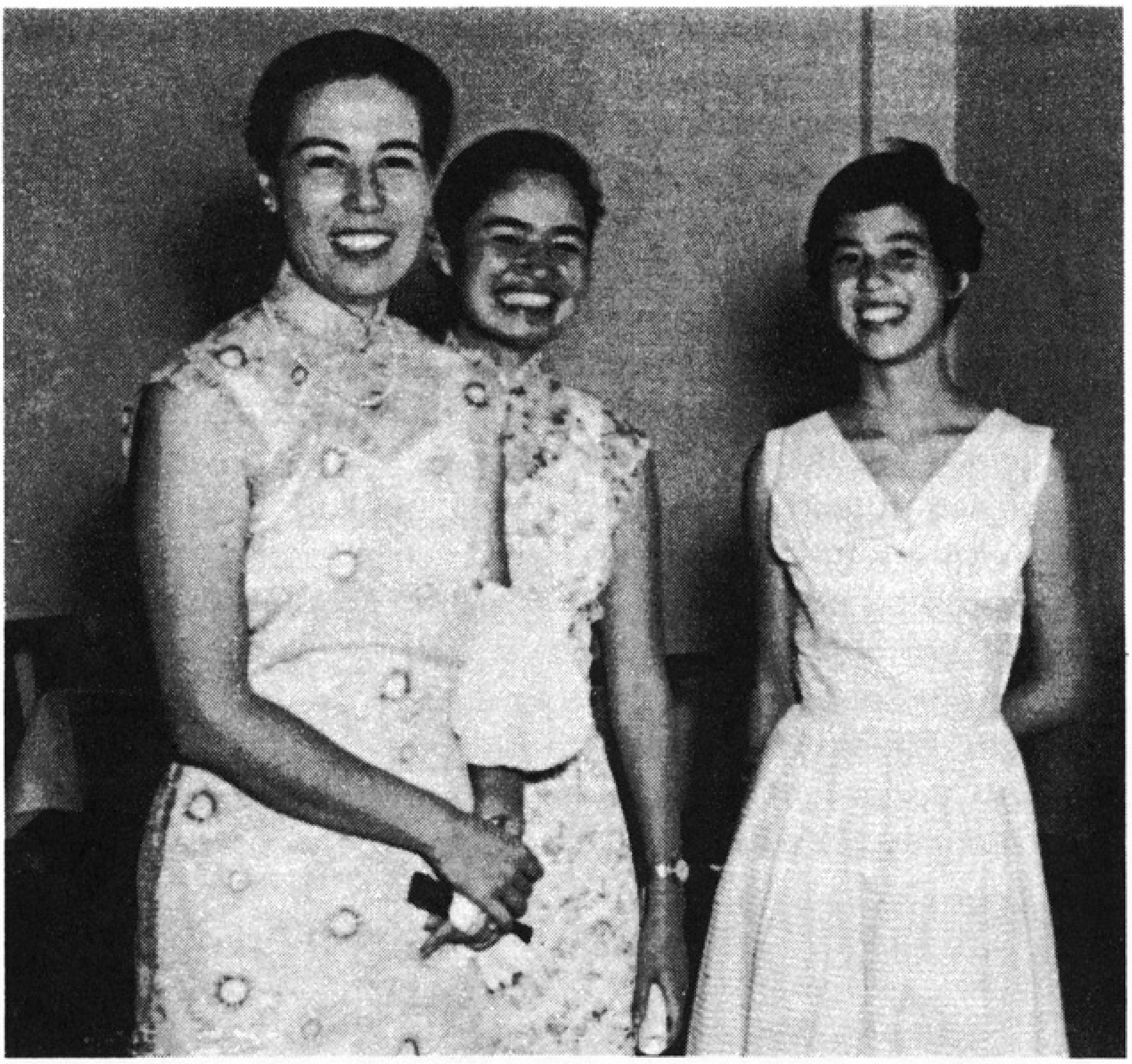
Competition for entrance was very keen indeed. We left Wendy's future in God's hands. Soon, the wonderful news came. She had been accepted! I was elated and proud and Wendy most excited!

"Before you leave Hong Kong, Wendy, I would like you to learn the foundations of Chinese painting. The brush strokes will help you in your work and you will absorb some knowledge of Chinese traditional painting," I advised. So, I found a Chinese artist to come to our house to give her some lessons.

He was most enthusiastic about her work and praised it. I thought I'd take the opportunity to learn something myself and sat in at the lessons and also tried to paint. When he came to see what I had done, he would say, "Well, not bad, not bad at all – that is, for a housewife!" It was most discouraging for me, so I gave up trying to paint with Wendy.

I tried to fit Wendy out the best I knew how, ready for her trip to England. Soon it was time for her to go. She was fortunate enough to travel with Grace, who was travelling to England at that time. We knew she would be in good hands and that Grace would take good care of her. We saw them off on the

On board S.S. Bayenstein to say farewell to Wendy and Grace with Irene and Junie (1955).



With Daphne and Wendy, just before Wendy left the nest.

ship. As I have said before, I hate good-byes. My "baby" was leaving the nest. This new direction in her life was to lead her to a successful and absorbing career. We certainly did not make the wrong decision for her.

Poor Daphne was now left entirely on her own. She was content to carry on with her work and to stay home with us. We did try to give her a chance to go abroad, especially when she had an offer from the World Health Organisation for a secretarial post in Geneva. It seemed a great opportunity for her. But, "No, I prefer to stay at home with you and wait till Daddy retires in 1957 and then go on to England with you," she insisted. So, we felt we had given her the opportunity, but understood that she was not prepared to leave home yet. I, of course, was delighted to have her company. It would have been so lonely otherwise, as I saw little of K.C., except to go out together on official functions.

In 1955, Dick graduated from Cambridge and got into Westminster Teaching Hospital. Selwyn-Clarke had so great an interest in Dick's career that he volunteered to show him around the four teaching hospitals in London to help Dick decide where to go. Dick chose Westminster and, fortunately, was admitted when he got through Cambridge. We were naturally delighted as it meant he was well set for a good training.

Since both Dick and Wendy would be studying in London, they decided to get a little flat together. They found a tiny one in Peckham, South-East London. It was near the market and that fascinated Wendy. The first picture she sent us was a sketch on a scraper board of "the English Housewife in Peckham market". She really captured the "feel" of the place.

Dick stayed on in Westminster Hospital till 1958. He had a successful time there getting his medical training and winning several prizes in Surgery, Medicine and Forensic Medicine. He enjoyed life – working hard and playing hard throughout his years in training and getting to know many friends, especially lady friends! He took me literally when I said to him on leaving home, "Dick, get to know as many girls as you can before you decide on marrying one!" He never looked back. During this period in Westminster, he met Yvonne, whom he later married. We met her for the first time at the graduation ceremony. She was a beautiful girl, more like a model than a doctor.

Wendy was also doing very well at the Slade, winning prizes now and then. In fact, she did so well that she was encouraged to stay another year – instead of a three year course, she stayed four years. She was given a travelling scholarship to Paris, where she studied etching under Professor Hayter and to Florence, where she broadened her experience and then spent some time in Assisi. She very much enjoyed that period of her life at the Slade, I am sure. It was during this time that she met John Mack, who was training with Dick and Yvonne. He was at Cambridge with Dick and seemed a nice enough person at the time.

During those years in Peckham, Dick and Wendy saw quite a lot of Grace, who was living in Ridge Hill, Golders Green. She was very good to them and "mothered" them. Wendy was, in fact, staying with Grace when she had an attack of iritis. She was petrified at the thought that she might lose her sight but Grace nursed and supported her throughout this worrying time.

It was between the years of 1954 to 1956, that is within fourteen months, that I had a series of operations. First of all, it was a grumbling appendix, then an hysterectomy and the last but not least, a haemorrhoidectomy, the experience of which I shall never forget! I also had a minor eye operation. So, I was in and out of hospital all through this period.

I was very lucky this happened during the time Daphne was working in Queen Mary Hospital, so she was able to visit me. She was very supportive. In fact, she was the one who insisted I consult a doctor when I wasn't feeling well and took it into her own hands to arrange an appointment for me. I had kept putting it off and putting it off so many times.

K.C. was so busy at that time, but he tried his best to visit me regularly. I felt his mind was on his own problems but I was grateful to see him whenever he could spare the time.

I had real V.I.P. treatment and the staff couldn't have been kinder to "the boss's" wife. My room was filled with flowers from well wishers. I felt like a film star. I was so grateful to be able just to lie in bed and not have to face all those interminable social functions. I was able to let go and be at rest.

CHAPTER 21

K.C.'s Awards and Other Activities

In January, 1956, in the New Year's Honours, K.C. was awarded the C.M.G. (Companion of St Michael and St George) by Her Majesty the Queen. There was great jubilation and celebration once again in the Chinese Community. He was the first Chinese civil servant to be given this decoration! I was very proud of him and grateful that his work and sacrifice had been recognised in this way. I never was one for publicity. In fact, I shied away from it and found it annoying and an embarrass-

K.C. receiving his award (C.M.G.) from Sir Alexander Grantham (1956).

ment. But, this was different. It was a recognition of K.C.'s worth. He was also awarded the Coronation Medal and the Pacific Medal, the latter of which I was given, too, for my services during the war.

The social and official functions went on and on and increased as the months went by. There were two highlights at that time. One was the visit of Lady Mountbatten, who was the President of St John Ambulance Association. Since K.C. was very involved with this Association, he had the privilege of showing her round. I met her, too, and was really struck by the force of her personality. She was extremely nice and put me at ease immediately.

The other highlight was the visit of Princess Marina, the Duchess of Kent, another fine lady and full of fun. She laid the foundation stone of the Tsan Yuk Hospital K.C. was building as a maternity hospital in Hong Kong. It was a great occasion. She seemed to do it with enjoyment, which lightened the mood of the ceremony. There was a ball in Government House arranged for her. It was very colourful. She wore a fabulous long gown with a train and looked very elegant. K.C. was privileged to dance with her. We were led to the dais where she sat with the Governor, (Sir Alexander Grantham) and later K.C. bowed and went off with her on to the ballroom, while I sat with the Governor. Soon, he said to me, "Look, Florence, K.C. is stepping on the Duchess' gown!" He thought it was a huge joke, but I was rather embarrassed. The Duchess was very gracious about it and laughed.

Sir Alan Lennox-Boyd, the Secretary of State for the Colonies also visited Hong Kong with Lady Lennox-Boyd. K.C. showed him round the various hospitals and clinics of the Colony including the Island of Cheung Chan to see the medical work being done there. When K.C. retired, Sir Alan wrote a very appreciative letter to him, thanking him for his "loyal and able work for the Government and people of Hong Kong", and also congratulating him on the recent honour bestowed on him by the Queen.

Presenting certificates and prizes at a Nurses Graduation (1956).

During this period, K.C. was also made an Honorary Life Member of the British Red Cross Society. He was very much involved with Red Cross work in Hong Kong and was Chairman of the Society there for many years.

Together with Dr Frazer, the Director of the Mission to Lepers at that time, K.C. founded the Leper Colony on the Island of Hayling Chau. We spent much time visiting it and I managed to plant many flowering shrubs, especially different varieties of Hibiscus from my own cuttings, to add some colour to the island.

Among the many associations he was connected with, he was also President of the Hong Kong Anti-Tuberculosis Association, which was doing excellent work for the prevention and treatment of tuberculosis in the colony. At that time this disease was very prevalent in Hong Kong due to overcrowding and malnutrition of the under privileged of the population. K.C. was the first to introduce BCG vaccination against tuberculosis which is now used in England.

K.C. was also honoured by the Tung Wah Board of Directors by naming a wing of the hospital after him – "The Yeo Wing". And also a Hall of the Tung Wah Eastern Hospital Nurses' quarters was dedicated in his name in 1952.

Just before his retirement, the Hong Kong Dental Society, (affiliated to the British Dental Association), elected K.C. to be an Honorary Member of the Society. Honorary Membership is extended to "outstanding members of the Medical and allied professions", and this was the first occasion in the Society's history that such membership had been bestowed.

Of course, all these honours in appreciation of his work, gratified me immensely and I felt that perhaps it had all been worth while.

At the opening of the Maurine Grantham Health Centre with Sir Alexander and Lady Grantham (1954).

CHAPTER 22

Father's Death

In April, 1956, Father became ill. His condition gradually deteriorated and soon everyone realised that he was sinking. He had lost the will to live, although his brain was active and clear until the very end. He was ninety-four. He died in his room in his town house, Idlewild, and was carried downstairs into the large living room, where he lay in state for a few days.

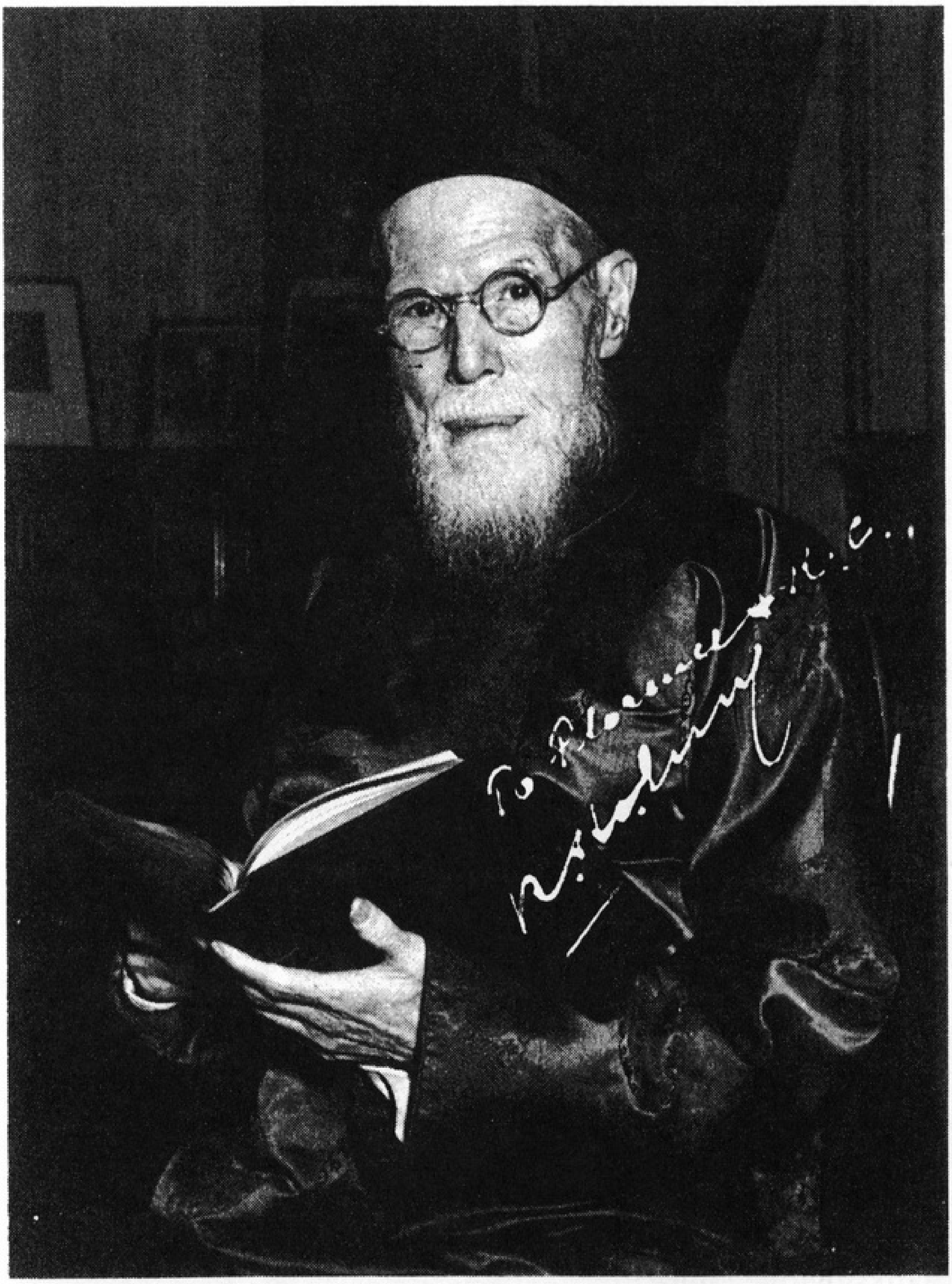
I was privileged to make up his face, which hardly needed anything. It was amazing that his colour seemed to remain for a long while and his skin was perfect. This, I'm sure, was due to his pure diet of soured milk for most of his life. Once the muscles had relaxed, the beautiful bone structure of his face showed up. He looked very handsome, like a marble statue.

Friends and relatives streamed in one after another to pay their last respects. After all, he *was* the Grand Old Man of Hong Kong and he had made his mark in Hong Kong's history.

We, as his children, were obliged to stand beside him hour after hour to return the bows of well-wishers. The women on one side and the male offspring on the other. It was really tedious and I became very tired. Often the room became stuffy and I would feel faint. In fact, my sister, Victoria, fainted. The heavy scent of all the floral tributes filled the air.

At last, the day of the funeral came and the funeral procession trailed all over the town right through towards Happy Valley, where Father was buried. We were all absolutely exhausted and returned home to Idlewild, where we sat down to a great feast.

When someone dies at this great age, there is usually feasting to mark the occasion which I suppose is some sort of thanksgiving. There must have been nearly one hundred of us, mostly relations, who sat down to a meal. We sat at round tables of ten, and there must have been ten tables, dotted throughout Father's large house.



Father

CHAPTER 23

Our Trip to Japan

It was during this period, as I mentioned before, that my health suffered a set-back and I had to undergo a series of operations. Eventually, I felt I really needed a break and tried to persuade K.C. to take me for a holiday.

There was no point going to Malaya, or Manila, for a break as the climate was so hot and debilitating it wouldn't have done me any good. The obvious place was Japan. But, we were still suffering from the memories of the war. K.C. found it very difficult to forgive the Japanese after what he had suffered from them.

I gave up hope of ever being able to get away for recuperation when K.C. suddenly said, one day, "I've been praying very hard to ask God to help me to forgive the Japanese. I feel less bitter about them now and have forgiven them and have decided to take you after all to Japan." I was very pleased, indeed, to hear this and, as soon as the date was decided, we made preparations to go. K.C. said he really felt a wonderful sense of relief to be free of his resentment of the Japanese and a great weight was taken from him.

"If I pay my own passage, can I come with you to Japan?" Daphne asked us. "Certainly," we replied. "We'd be pleased to have you with us." So we set off together.

The sea trip did me a world of good, I could relax. There were no official or social functions to worry about and I slept well and ate well. Daphne also enjoyed herself and made new friends. It did her good, too, to get away from work.

We docked at Yokohama and were met by two of my Japanese school friends. It was wonderful to see them again after so many years. They took us to a real Japanese meal and I tried Japanese food for the first time. I found a lot of the raw food a little strange.

We then went on to Nikko, where the lovely old Buddhist shrines were built. We were fascinated by the architecture – the red timber and the up-turned corners of the roofs and the sound of bells and gongs. The grounds were landscaped with typical Japanese styled gardens with some Bonsai trees, bridges and large stones placed here and there in strategic positions. Everything was very artistic.

From Nikko, we went on to Lake Suzengi, where we stayed several days in a little hotel by the lake. It was so peaceful and quiet. I felt the real benefit of the trip. We had lovely fresh trout, which I ate every day. There was nothing else I preferred more. The little old Japanese waiter was very amused when I repeated the order at nearly every meal! We were told the trout, which was bred on the lake, originated from Scotland!

We also took a fantastic boat trip on the lake. This was during the autumn months and the colours were changing. I have never seen a sight more magnificent than the autumn colours in Japan. Many of the trees were maples and nothing is more colourful than maples in autumn. I was so excited and took many pictures. At that time, I had become very interested in photography and had also borrowed an extra camera to take with us. This was a movie camera, so here I was, clicking away.

Tragically, most of the films were blank! I can't imagine what I had done, or had failed to do – it was a complete disaster. Never mind. I shall never be able to wipe out the memory of those colours and the mirror-like waters, which reflected every shade of gold, orange, red and green.

It was a lovely break and we all returned home feeling refreshed and in better health.

CHAPTER 24

Getting Ready to Leave – Our Farewells

It was getting near the end of K.C.'s tour of office and he was due for retirement. In fact, he was due for his leave in July, 1957, prior to retirement. Sir Alexander Grantham, who thought well of K.C.'s work, asked whether he would consider another term of office. This would be another three years. Though it was a great honour to be invited to stay on, and it was wonderful that K.C. had done so well as to be offered this opportunity; I really felt he had done enough.

"K.C., I think it is better to leave now when you are still in demand and on the crest of the wave. Anyway, it would be nice for you to go to England so that your son could get to know you. You have to make up your own mind. But, as far as I'm concerned, I've had enough and would like to go to England to be with the children. You can stay on if you wish."

It was very difficult for K.C. to make his decision. The members of the Chinese Medical Association sent a petition to the Governor to ask that K.C. should stay on. The reply was, "We did ask Yeo to stay on, but it was his idea to go." K.C. listened to my advice and we started to make preparations to leave.

While K.C. went on with his work, I was busy making arrangements to get the contents of our home sorted out. Things we were taking with us had to be packed and crated. Other things had to be disposed of. Luckily, we didn't have a house to sell.

I was grateful for any help that was given. One of K.C.'s staff was assigned to help me. He was experienced and advised me on how to get our furniture, crockery and glassware packed. We didn't have too much, but I did manage to purchase some

Chinese blackwood furniture and two nice Chinese carpets. Father had left me just enough in his will for me to do that. Daphne had also given us a nest of little blackwood tables.

I packed as much of our belongings as possible, which I thought might be useful in England. We had a set of cane furniture, which I decided to take with us. I have never regretted the decision – even after thirty years, we are still making use of the set.

The farewell parties began and hardly stopped until we sailed. All the various departments, associations, relatives and friends gave us a special farewell party. It was wonderful to be so well loved and respected, but it wore us out.

At last, there were only two weeks to go. It was time to leave our home and say good-bye to our amahs. They had no trouble getting other jobs and we saw to it that they were well settled. We moved to Repulse Bay Hotel for our last two weeks. It seemed fitting to do this as we began our married life in the same place. K.C. had his swims each morning before he went to work and managed a quick dip in the evening after work, before setting off on the social rounds.

My brother, Eddie, was to give us a quiet party on his little motorised junk on a Saturday and I was looking forward to it. Two days before this, we had a phone call in the early hours of the morning from Irene to say that Eddie had died of a heart attack. It was a great shock as he had not been unwell at all. He was only in his early fifties.

A few nights before we were to sail, Sir Alexander and Lady Grantham invited us to dine with them alone. I felt it was a very great honour and was touched to be invited in this way. They were such very busy people and yet they spared a whole evening for us. We dined by candlelight on a warm summer's evening on the verandah of Government House. It was an intimate evening and we felt very touched by the warm friendship extended to us.

K.C. had always had a very good relationship with Sir Alex. They met regularly to discuss any problems K.C. might have come up with in his work. He took a personal interest in what was going on in K.C.'s department, so things ran smoothly and K.C. had direct access to him. His wife, Maurine, I think had a great regard for K.C. and showed an interest in his work and his family.

Alex offered us the Governor's car to take us on our last journey from Repulse Bay to Queen's Pier, where many officials, nurses and friends gathered to wish us farewell. The chauffeur was so sure of the time it would take to do the journey that he was over-confident and, consequently, made us late for our arrival at Queen's Pier. We met up with a funeral procession and we were caught up in a traffic jam! We arrived rather shamefaced and embarrassed at having kept everyone waiting.

There was much shaking of hands, kisses and a few tears as we said farewell. A string of crackers gave us a good send off as the Governor's launch ferried us mid-stream to our ship. We felt like royalty! A few very close friends and relatives came to see us off on the ship and settled us into our cabins. Of course, Daphne was with us all the time.

Soon, it was time to set sail and we slowly drifted out of the harbour. We stayed on deck to catch the last glimpse of Hong Kong, my home, where I had spent my whole life. I wondered what the future would hold, but I was certain we were right to have made the decision to go. I took a long, long look as we slid through Lyemun Pass – never to see Hong Kong again to this day. It was the seventh day of July, 1957.

CHAPTER 25

Our Retirement to England

We stopped at Singapore on our way and met up with K.C.'s family once again. It was difficult to tell his father that we had planned to make our home in England as it was so much further away and he was getting old. But he took it well and felt secure living in K.C.'s sister's home. We did not see him again. He died suddenly and peacefully sitting in a chair watching television a few years later.

On this trip, my old classmate, Angela Alves joined us. It was her first trip to England and so she was thrilled about everything. We felt we had a hand in helping her get this holiday. K.C. and I knew her boss and when, in conversation one day, he was praising Angela's virtues, I said, at once, "If you really value her so much, it would be nice if you showed your appreciation by granting her her greatest wish – paid leave to England." He agreed at once. Angela was ecstatic.

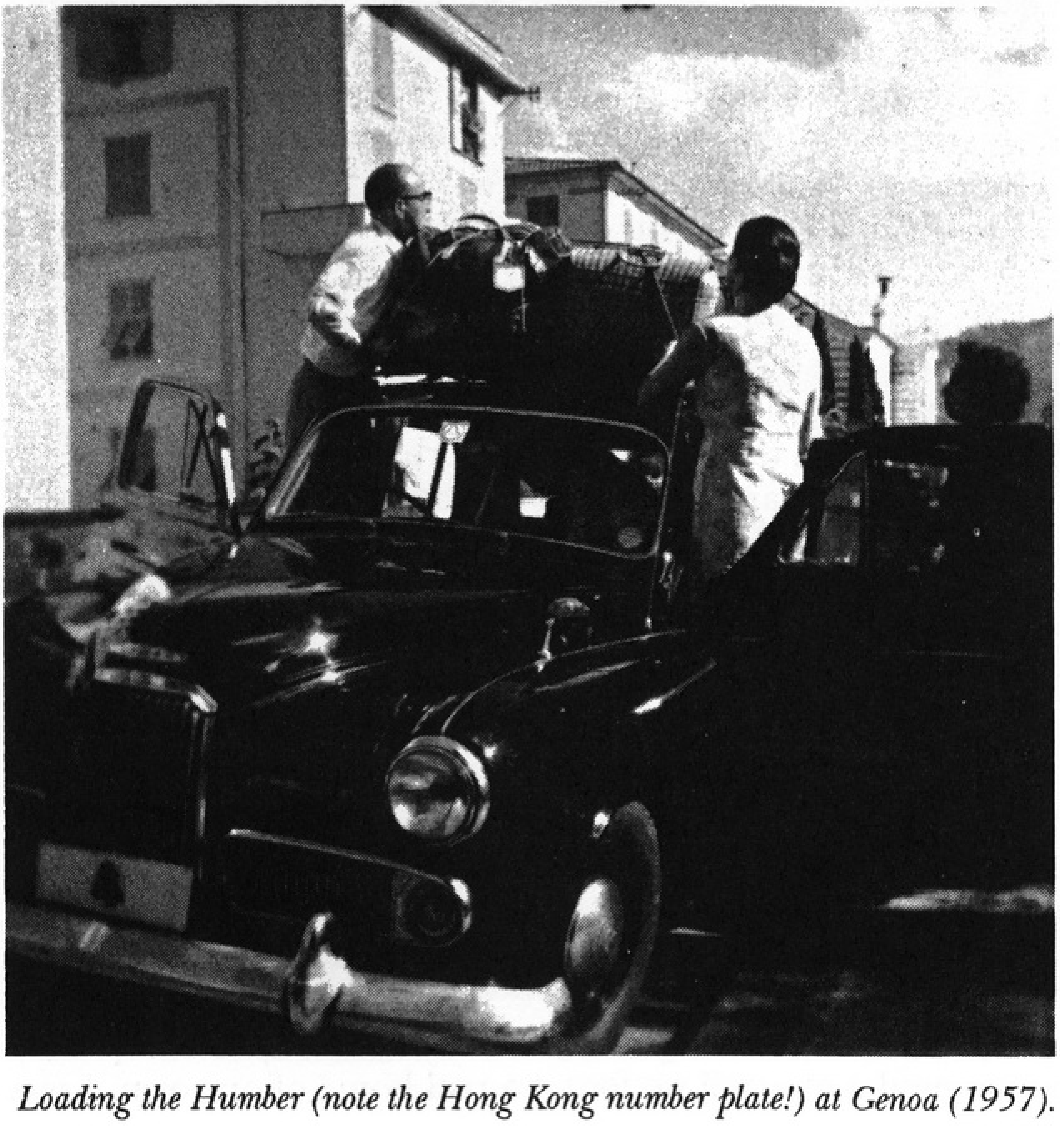
While we were in Singapore, K.C. met up with an old friend of Hong Kong University days, Tan Ping Leat. He had a daughter, Eleanor. "K.C.," he asked, "would it be possible for you to keep an eye on Eleanor if she travelled with you to England?"

"Certainly," K.C. answered. "I shall be delighted and she will be good company for Daphne on board." So Eleanor joined us and we made a happy group.

The trip to England passed very quickly. There were the usual deck sports in which K.C. excelled. The Yeos were noted to be the ones to carry off the prizes. I remember on one of the trips when Wendy was with us we won all the prizes!

We stopped at the usual places. I found great pleasure in watching Angela and Eleanor seeing and enjoying the new sights and scenery. Soon, we were on the Mediterranean. We had arranged with Wendy to meet her in Genoa, where the ship was to dock. Dick was busy visiting one of his many girl friends in Norway. It was brave of her to travel alone from England. She hardly spoke a word of Italian, but she made her way and was there on the pier to meet us. It was wonderful to see her there – looking very attractive in the sunshine. My baby had grown into a woman. She was twenty.

We had taken our car with us. We had grown very fond of it and, since it was comparatively new, we thought we could still get a lot of use out of her. And we did! She was a Humber Hawk and we still had the Hong Kong number plate on her, which



Loading the Humber (note the Hong Kong number plate!) at Genoa (1957).

was number 4. I remember we were stopped in London later by a policeman. "What sort of number is that on your number plate?" he asked. He thought we were trying to be funny. But we assured him that we had just arrived from Hong Kong and it was a genuine number plate. K.C. was given this number because he was one of the Heads of the big government departments in Hong Kong.

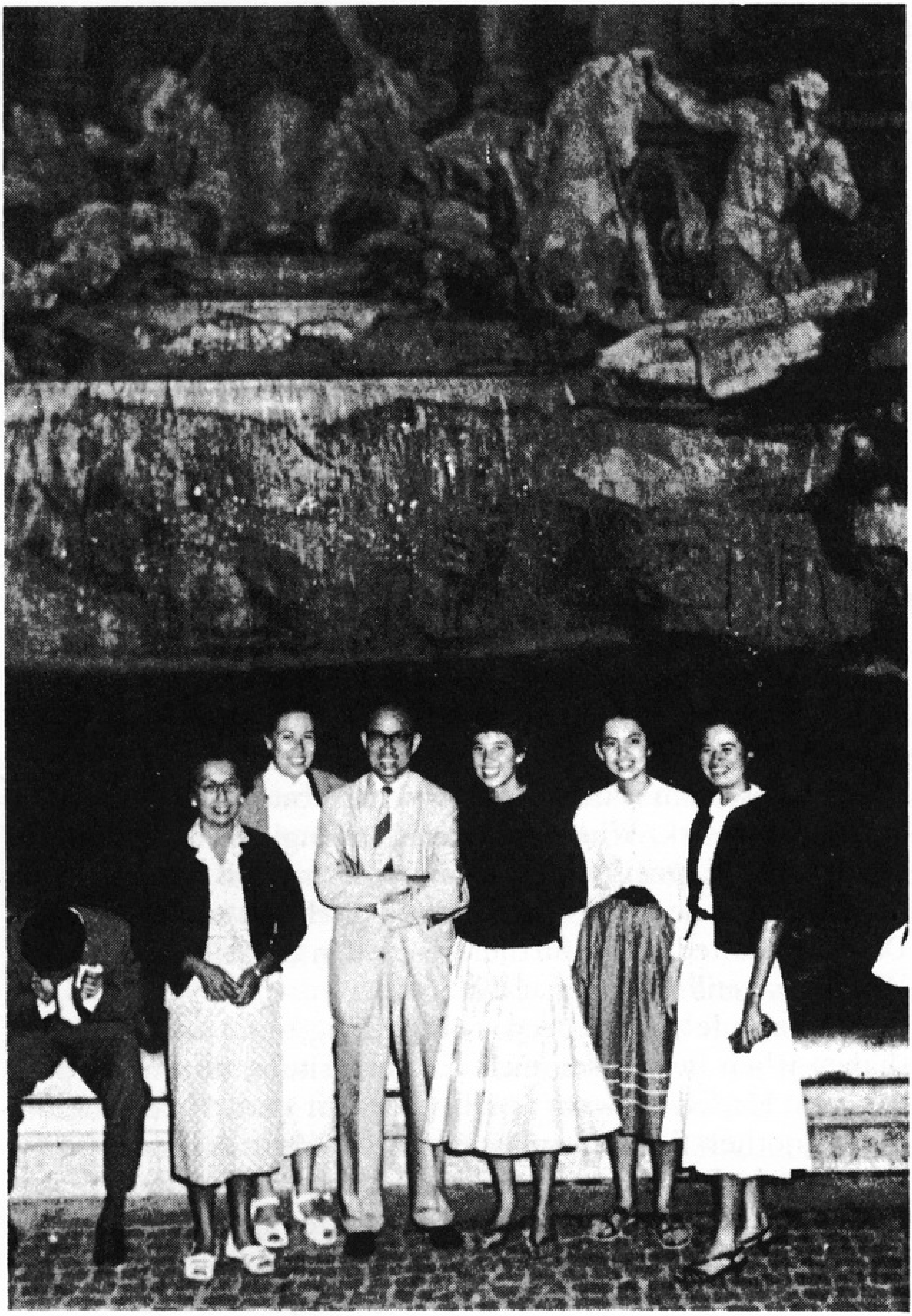
To return to Genoa, we disembarked, together with all our luggage. (The household furniture and goods were to be sent on to Tilbury Docks, where they would be stored until we called for it). Wendy met Eleanor and, of course, was delighted to meet "Auntie" Angela again. So, miraculously, we all piled into the car – all six of us – plus our luggage. The boot was crammed and the roof rack was piled high! We were quite a sight and on-lookers smiled with amusement. Someone said, "And where is your bath tub?" Poor Humber, she would have groaned, if she could. Actually, we later found the roof was a little dented with the weight of the luggage.

We visited Rome and Florence and took in the usual sights. I particularly enjoyed the beauty and atmosphere of Florence. One could spend at least a month in a place like that and still need to go back to discover and absorb more.

We saw the leaning tower of Pisa and went on up north and crossed the Alps into Switzerland and then on across to Paris and up the Eiffel Tower, and then over to England. It was a wonderful time we had together. We were always laughing and joking. K.C. and I had the company of an old friend, and the three young girls got on so well together; it was lovely just to watch them. They raised quite a few "cat calls", especially from the Italians! Often the girls wore their "Cheung Sarms" (Chinese dress with slit skirt!).

We found a flat in south-east London. We managed somehow to squeeze in. Soon, Angela and Eleanor went on their way and we said our farewells.

The flat was in Herne Hill. This would only be temporary accommodation until we found a real home of our own. I was



By the 'Three Coins' Fountain in Rome with Angela, K.C., Wendy, Eleanor and Daphne (1957).

so excited at the prospect of owning my own house, at last. (K.C. was allowed to commute part of his pension to buy a house. It would mean a smaller pension, but it was to be the best thing we ever did).

We were in England to stay, at last, as one complete family. I was truly happy and thanked God for this blessing. I was all set to make a lovely home for us all.

For the first six months, we were stuck in this flat. There were two living rooms and two bedrooms, with another very tiny room. It was supposed to be furnished, but it only had the bare essentials. There was supposed to be central heating, but we often felt cold. This cost us £50.00 a week. It seemed an exorbitant amount for a flat, but we had to stay on week after week until we found a home to buy.

We spent many weeks house-hunting. It was very exhausting driving down to Surrey to look at various houses on sale. The days were so short as it was approaching winter. At last, we found a suitable house that was big enough for all five of us, with a lovely big garden in a pretty part of Leatherhead, called Givons Grove.

We chose somewhere near Epsom because this was where K.C. found work. When we arrived in England, K.C. assessed our financial position and realised that his pension was insufficient to keep the whole family. Dick was still in training. Daphne wanted to do further courses in dress making, while Wendy was still studying at the Slade.

K.C. also felt very bored with nothing to do and was quite shaken when he saw some elderly men sitting dozing on park benches. He felt he wasn't quite ready for that! He decided to learn another field of medicine and took a job as a Junior Registrar in Psychiatry in St Ebba's Hospital, Epsom. He was starting from the bottom rung of the ladder again. Asked at the interview why he was prepared to come right down the grade, he answered, "It will be a lesson in humility!"

All this time, I was trying to learn how to tackle housework and doing all the shopping for a large grown up family. It was quite strenuous as I had never done this sort of work before. We were spoilt in Hong Kong; labour was cheap and Mamma used to think it was a waste of time to learn to cook and sew and do housework. She would say, "Haven't you anything better to do? Go and do some studying."

Somehow, I muddled through. I was happy to be in England and wasn't afraid of work. The family was patient and encouraging, especially with my cooking!

Altogether we stayed six long months in this flat. K.C. had to drive to Epsom every day, which was quite an inconvenience. Though we had bought the house, the people living in it didn't move out until six months later.

Wendy had her twenty-first birthday party in the flat. It was a happy event and there were many young people present, mainly friends of Dick and Wendy. It was lovely to see them enjoying themselves. Daphne must have felt a little shy and overwhelmed by them all as she had not had time to make many friends in England. However, she joined in the fun.

During this period, Daphne decided to take some ballroom dancing lessons. She met a nice young man there, who also had decided to learn to dance. I could tell she was interested in him from the way she spoke of him. I persuaded her to ask him in the next time he saw her home. So, we met Bob and I could see at once that a romance was developing. They were married in March the following year!

Before we left the flat in 1958, we celebrated our Silver Wedding. We had a happy time together with the family and some close friends. It was difficult to believe we had been married for twenty-five years. I was forty-three and felt I had already been through a lifetime of experiences. K.C. at fifty-five was just starting another career.

CHAPTER 26

Life in Nyetimber and the Arrival of the Grandchildren

At last, in June, 1958, we moved down to Leatherhead into our very first home, "Nyetimber".

When we moved in with all our crates from Hong Kong, we had the invaluable help of Bill and Thisel. Bill took a week off to help us settle in. They were true friends, indeed. We first met them after the war when they were sent out to Hong Kong to help K.C. in his preventive health work in pest and rodent control, which was a health hazard at that time. We took them under our wing and showed them Hong Kong. Actually, Bill has a Ph.D. in Entomology and Thisel was trained in rodent control. We have kept in touch, spending two holidays together. But, now they live in Devon, so we don't see much of one another.

'Nyetimber' (1958-1969).

While we were waiting for the house, I had lost no time making arrangements for carpets and curtains to be fitted and made. Also, we had chosen the furniture as well. Each of the children had the choice of furniture for their own room. We had bought Nyetimber to house all the children for some time.

The house was situated in a lovely position in Givons Grove – the last in a cul-de-sac. This led on to a footpath where we could go for walks at any time. There were fields on two sides of the house where corn and wheat were grown and during the summer months I loved to sit and watch the breeze fanning the sea of corn into ocean waves.

There were four enormous beech trees on one side of the garden. They were protected trees because they were so large and quite a feature in the district. There, again, I could sit and watch the fresh green leaves unfurl in the spring and in the autumn to gradually turn from green to gold to red. In the winter, these trees were just as beautiful with their smooth majestic trunks rising high and their bare branches showing the full beauty of the structure of the tree. No wonder they were protected. We looked after them with loving care.

The garden was large, about two-thirds of an acre in size. This was all new to me and presented quite a challenge. Although I always had a passion to plant things as a child and was interested in the garden, I had done little actual gardening and knew nothing of English shrubs and plants. But, I set about learning and the "bug" soon bit me!

I took a correspondence course in Complete Gardening and began reading and learning and picking my neighbour's brains about plants. I was lucky to learn quite a bit from her father, who was a nurseryman. He really was a great help and he started me off when he took me to choose the first trees and shrubs. He also introduced me to a hand mower, a Maxi J.P. It is an excellent mower, which I have kept to this day as it keeps the lawn looking like velvet. It is still going strong after thirty-one years of use!

We soon settled down to a routine. K.C. drove to Epsom every day. He also had to take turns with night duties. Sometimes, I would visit him when he had weekend duties and have a meal with him in hospital. During dry days, I spent most of the time in the garden – planning, digging, planting, weeding, mowing, clipping hedges, pruning and all the other one-hundred-and-one jobs one does in the garden.

Daphne was nearing the end of her course in dressmaking in London. She and Bob were engaged and they planned to be married in March, 1959. Daphne was not keen on a grand wedding and wished to keep everything simple. They were married on a lovely sunny spring day in a Registry Office and then we came home to celebrate with a few of her friends and some of our relatives. I remember it was such a bright and warm day that we were all able to go out into the garden and take a very informal group photograph. Bob's parents were there and his sister and brother, and we all made friends with one another.

Dick had, by now, graduated from Westminster Hospital. He had met Yvonne and they planned to be married in January, 1960. He had started work in Kingston Hospital as a House Surgeon. These were busy times for him. House posts were very strenuous and often young doctors were kept up all night and expected to carry on working throughout the next day. He often looked as if he were sleep-walking. After this, he took the post as casualty officer at Westminster Hospital and then on to St Leonards Hospital in the East End of London as House Physician.

Dick and Yvonne decided to be married in Leatherhead Parish Church. I helped to make arrangements for the wedding reception in Leatherhead itself. We kept it fairly simple and many of our friends rallied round with food and a beautiful wedding cake. I was very touched that some friends travelled from afar to attend the wedding.

Not long afterwards, Dick got the post of Senior House Officer in the Royal Marsden. Then, he went on to Hammersmith Hospital as House Surgeon. He was getting valuable and varied experience all through. After this, he began his

Registrar's posts in Ashford Hospital, Middlesex, the Brompton Hospital for Chest Diseases and Dulwich Hospital.

When Dick had done his Registrar's posts, he managed to get an appointment as Senior Registrar in King's College Hospital. This was a landmark and a great step towards his future career. In 1967, he became Senior Registrar in Brighton Hospital. He then went on to study for the highest degree in Surgery – a Master's, which gave him the degree of M.Chir., having obtained the F.R.C.S. earlier on. In April, 1968, he became a Consultant Surgeon in the Hastings Group of Hospitals and moved down to Sussex to live. He had just turned thirty-four years of age and we felt it was a great achievement.

To get back to Leatherhead and the rest of the family, Wendy had, by now, graduated from the Slade School of Fine Art in London and decided to marry John Mack in June of the same year.

We decided, like Daphne, to keep things simple and have the reception at home. The garden was large and the views around were beautiful and this lent itself to a lovely June wedding. We held the reception out of doors. It was again a beautiful day and friends, once more, rallied round to help. Our neighbours, in particular, did most of the catering and it was a very happy occasion. Wendy was radiant and seemed to enjoy it most of all. She had so many of her friends there and a lot of young relatives, whom she had grown up with.

Well, after all these weddings, I suddenly realised that the nest was empty and I had nothing left to do. It was a time of adjustment and I don't think I was prepared for it. I suddenly felt extremely lonely. I had no career of my own to fall back on. It would have helped if I could go back to work. I was only forty-five. I began to get bouts of depression.

Gradually, I threw myself into learning as much about gardening as I could. I read only gardening books. I listened and watched on radio and T.V. all the gardening programmes and literally buried myself in the garden. This was a great help.

We had a few friends near us, but the one friendship I most

K.C. relaxing with Winifred and 'Tanya' at Nyetimber (1963).

cherished was that of Winifred Hurrell. She had been Headmistress of our daughters' school in Hong Kong. She was one of the most dedicated persons I had ever met. She was always available to parents with any problems. Later, when she retired to Reading, we kept in touch and often she would come to Nyetimber for visits. She was our guest on holiday in Austria and we also went to a retreat together. I have learned so much from Winifred – her patience, her humour and her attitude to life. I hold her up as an example always. It was a great loss to me when she died in 1969 at the age of 76, still a very active person.

Soon, we had the happy news from Daphne that she was expecting her first baby in December. I was overjoyed at the thought of becoming a grandmother. I was so excited about this and began knitting baby clothes immediately. In fact, I became a knitting machine after that as the grandchildren began pouring in!

We suggested that perhaps Daphne and Bob might like to come and stay with us during the last two weeks before the baby was born as they were living in a rented flat near Kew Gardens. They agreed and Daphne was registered with our Leatherhead doctor and arrangements were made for the baby to be born in Dorking Hospital.

At last, the great day arrived in the early hours of the twelfth of December, 1960. We drove her, together with Bob, to the hospital and waited anxiously for news and, at last, it came. It was a boy and they named him Kelvin.

After a few days, Daphne returned to Nyetimber with baby Kelvin. We were a bit anxious as Daphne was having trouble with breast feeding. She was developing an abscess, which caused her a lot of distress and didn't help the baby. We eventually called in the doctor, who tried to keep the baby on breast feeding. On hindsight, it was not a good idea as, gradually, Kelvin was turning an unhealthy colour and began being sick and having diarrhoea. The doctor decided then to stop the breast feeding, but the damage was

Kelvin and Louise in 1966.

done and it was a very long time before the baby was normal again.

Soon, Daphne was well and strong enough to go home. I had done the best I could to help with nappies, etc. and to lighten her load. She was now ready to take up the reins again. Bob was a great help and nearly every night would walk the floor with the baby in his arms trying to comfort it and stop it from crying. He was a good father.

By Christmas, Yvonne told us that we were to become grandparents again in June of next year. We were delighted. I started knitting again!

I worked very hard, indeed, in Nyetimber. Of course, I was young enough to do it and it kept me occupied. The garden was developing nicely, but it was a job to keep everything as nice as I wanted it to be. I don't know how I managed single-handed besides all the housework and cooking. I'm afraid I often overdid it and this didn't help my depression.

K.C.'s work was quite hard, too. Dealing with patients in psychiatric work needed a lot of patience and stamina. He felt he had to go right away for a holiday whenever he had any leave to keep his own sanity. During these years, K.C. would book "package" tours, mainly to Spain, the Canaries, Madeira and Morocco. We also visited Austria, Switzerland and Greece.

I remember we had a great "adventure" during our visit to Greece and Rhodes. We spent the first week in Athens visiting many interesting sights especially the wonderful Acropolis. Somehow, I sensed an "atmosphere" in the city. The staff in the hotel didn't seem particularly polite nor friendly. But I thought perhaps it was just my imagination.

We then went on to Rhodes where we also visited many old Greek temples and saw some of the countryside. The hills were clothed with wild rock roses in full bloom, in various shades of yellow, gold and orange. Rhodes is a beautiful island and I enjoyed the five days there better than in Athens, in spite of having a fall and spraining my ankle rather badly. Consequently, I had to hobble about for the remainder of the trip.

We returned to Athens for a couple of nights before we were due to fly home. We were scheduled to fly very early in the morning at about 5 o'clock. We were all ready, packed and waiting, in the hotel lobby to be picked up by the Thomas Cook representative, (we were travelling on our own and *not* on the usual package tour).

At last he arrived, looking rather worried and said, "We must go at once to the airport. There are army tanks in the streets and they are blocking all the main roads. But never mind, don't worry, I have a taxi waiting and we will get you through the side streets to the airport." I asked, "What is happening?" and he answered, "There's a revolution going on!"

After twisting and turning through the narrow side streets, we arrived at the airport, hopefully to catch the last plane out. But this was not to be. We waited and waited. There was an eerie quiet, not like a busy airport at all. Soon soldiers arrived with their rifles, some with machine guns.

"The airport is closed, all planes are grounded," we were told. Here we were, stranded with only enough money between us to buy a drink on the plane, (not more than a pound!). I thought, "Never

Sightseeing with K.C. in Rhodes (1967).

mind, we shall stay in the airport until all this is over". But soon we were ordered to leave. The B.O.A.C. representative came along and took us to the head office which was right in front of the Parliament buildings.

Having been through *one* war, my first thought was food and survival! I managed to slip out to buy a couple of packets of biscuits from a street vendor. "Anyway," I thought, "this will last us the day and with water in the B.O.A.C. office we could just camp there till they get us out of the country."

We stayed all day in the office. We could see tanks roll by with soldiers and machine guns poised. These men looked like young boys. They seemed rather trigger-happy. All shops were closed. There was no other traffic. It was very quiet. I managed to take one or two pictures, through the plate-glass window, of the tanks as they rolled by, with the Parliament buildings in the background.

By 5 o'clock in the afternoon the B.O.A.C. representative came again and told us that we had to leave the premises as martial law had been declared and we were not permitted to stay on, (there were about a dozen of us altogether).

What were we to do with so little money? (This was in the days when we were restricted with only £50 allowance to take abroad). K.C. and another young American went out to search for cheap accommodation for the night.

Soon they returned to say they had found a cheap place in the back streets for the night – for exactly 7s6d (37 ½p)! So we ran down with our hand luggage as fast as we could.

When we took a look at our room and the state of the bed, I decided I would not bother to get into my nightdress, but just slept in my day clothes. I wondered how long since the sheets were changed! It was also safer to remain dressed in case we needed to get away quickly. We didn't sleep much that night.

Very early next morning, about 5 o'clock, the landlady knocked on our door, "Come quickly. I was out and saw a coach parked outside the B.O.A.C. office – there might be a chance they will get you to the airport for a flight home. I have made some coffee for you." We hurriedly drank the coffee and when K.C. offered to pay, the landlady wouldn't accept any money. She said, "I wish you to leave Athens with good memories of us here." We thanked her and dashed off down the narrow street and soon came to the coach. We boarded it and there were many others who had come along too.

We were taken to the airport. We had never seen such a sight! The place was absolutely jammed with people trying to get away. We jostled our way with our luggage to the customs. Some English people ahead of us were just waved on – they didn't bother to search their luggage. But when it was our turn we had to open up *everything*. They began literally to search our bags with a fine-tooth comb. I began to get impatient and annoyed. "Tell them we have British passports," I said to K.C. in a loud voice. The customs officer looked at me and closed our bags – it worked! We sighed with relief, especially when they didn't come across my roll of film which I had hidden carefully.

We then pushed our way to the departure lounge. On the way we were stopped – "Come this way – we want to see your camera." "But I haven't any film in my camera," I said. "We want to see it," the officials insisted. So we were ushered into a room with other people who were having their cameras examined. They took mine roughly away and opened it up. How thankful I was that I had taken the film out earlier and hidden it so carefully in my luggage. "O.K. – go on" – we were relieved and shuffled along with the packed crowd to the departure lounge. It was jammed with people.

As far as I can remember, there was only one plane leaving – it seemed *everyone* was wanting to get on it! When at last we were called to board it, it was "free for all". I said to K.C. "Go ahead and try to get a seat and save one for me." I was still hobbling with my sprained ankle and couldn't go any faster. So K.C. ran on ahead. He seemed to be able to get through fairly easily as I saw him mount the steps up to the plane.

When I got to the bottom of the steps there was a passport officer there. He examined my passport very carefully – my heart was beginning to pound uncomfortably fast. I held my breath. He seemed reluctant to let me go; but at last he grudgingly handed me the passport and waved me on. I sighed with relief and started to mount the steps. When I had gone half way up he stopped me and signalled me to come down again. He took my passport and looked over it yet again, consulting another officer and mumbling together over it. I had visions of spending the rest of my days trapped in a Greek jail! At last they were satisfied and said I could go. What a relief!

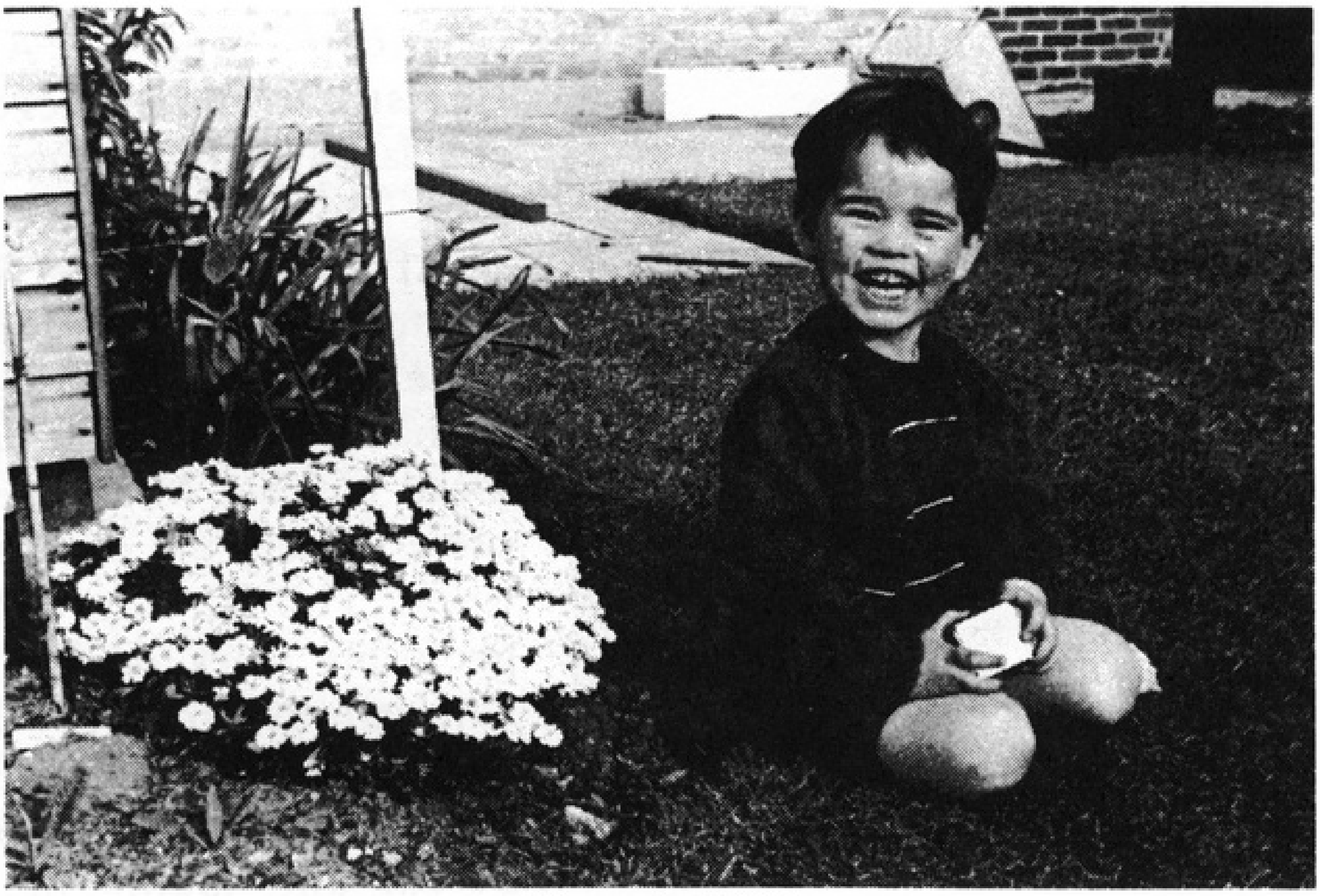
I clamoured up the steps as quickly as I could and dropped down beside K.C. in the plane. "Weren't we lucky to get on," he said, oblivious of what I had just gone through. "I nearly didn't make it," and told him what had happened. He was greatly relieved and thankful.

The only explanation for the questioning of my passport was the fact that I was born in Tsing Tao, China, and I was dressed in Chinese clothes in the passport photo; so perhaps they thought I was a communist from China! They were looking for communists who were stirring up trouble in Athens at the time. Later we learned that a few British were detained during this military coup and kept in custody on one of the Greek islands for some months. What a narrow escape I had had! I was so *very* glad and thankful to get back again on to British soil!

Soon June arrived and Simon was born to Yvonne. He was a lovely baby with jet black hair. When maternity leave was over, Yvonne went back to work. She was also practising psychiatry and didn't wish to give up her career. They employed an au pair girl and each year they had a different one. It was a pity they could not have had a nanny, at least.

In December, 1960, Wendy's husband was drafted into National Service. In fact, John was in the last batch before it was abolished. He applied to go to Hong Kong and Wendy was delighted to join him on Christmas Eve.

By August, 1961, Wendy was also expecting a baby and in May, 1962, Christopher was born in Hong Kong. From her letters, she received royal treatment in Queen Mary Hospital.



Simon in 1964.

K.C. had not been forgotten and quite a few people visited Wendy in respect for him, or sent her flowers, including the D.M.S.

Wendy was thrilled and delighted with her baby. We were sorry to have missed being around to see him. One of our amahs was wonderful to her and would go each day after work to help her with washing. She was such a loyal and faithful person.

All through this time in Hong Kong, Wendy continued her painting and also had an exhibition in the City Hall. She made innumerable friends. She sounded very happy there.

Life continued in Leatherhead on a pretty even keel. I tended to overwork as I was so keen on gardening and keeping my very first home as clean and as beautiful as I could. Of course, there was the usual struggle with cooking. But the family, who often dropped in and had meals with us, were very encouraging. On looking back, I suppose I did do pretty well in cooking in spite of the lack of experience and confidence and worrying about it. We even entertained with me cooking

Suzy in 1967.

Chinese meals! At Christmas there were also large family gatherings.

After sometime I found I really needed some help in the house as we had a fair amount of social life. So, Mrs Rose came to help me once a week. Though she did get some work done, I sometimes wondered whether it was worth the trouble of picking her up by car and taking her home each time and having to generally tidy up before she came!

Later on, Mr Parsons came to help me mow the large lawns. His sight was poor and he wasn't a gardener, but he was pleasant enough and helped me with the heavy work. By now, I was forty-eight.

In November, 1963, Suzy was born to Dick and Yvonne. She was another very pretty baby and a very good one. I remember she would lie contentedly in her cot and seldom demanded any attention. She had lovely long eyelashes, which, very early in her life, she learned to flutter and consequently melted many hearts!

This reminds me that when Simon was nine months old, we took care of him for two weeks while Dick and Yvonne went on holiday. K.C. was on weekend duty when Simon developed a temperature. It soared and soared until I thought he would burn up. In the end, I became so concerned I had to ring K.C. in hospital at 5 o'clock in the morning, having been up with Simon all night. I was desperate and extremely worried. It was a great responsibility to have. K.C. gave me some advice as to what to do.

Later in the morning, as I was bathing and changing Simon, I noticed a huge swelling and redness in his arm. He had been vaccinated. His parents had forgotten to tell us! It was a great relief to know the cause of his fever. But, I wasn't pleased that we weren't told he had been vaccinated just before he came to us. K.C. had advised this vaccination since Simon was born because, having been a "health" man, he was always conscious of preventive medicine.

I remember an elderly lady, Mrs Ramsay, who lived near us, would come round each day Simon was with us, to help me look after him. Yvonne had given me a list and timetable of his feeding. It seemed a very long list and a lot of food! Even Mrs Ramsay said, "He has a lot to get through in a day, hasn't he?" Much as I enjoyed having Simon with me, I was relieved when I handed him back to his parents!

We used to have Suzy stay with us for short periods now and then also. I was a very busy Granny.

By now, Wendy had returned with Christopher. We met them at the airport. She was radiantly happy and so proud to show us her baby. He looked so sweet and content in the little wicker basket that he travelled in. We bundled them into our car and drove them home to Kingston.

K.C. had bought a little Mini for me to use. Actually, it was the sum

Christopher in 1965.

total of a small insurance policy he had taken up after the war. He had lost his life insurance as he could not pay up the four years' premium due after the war years. It just enabled us to buy the Mini. It was a handy little car and we became good friends. It took me to all three families in turn whenever I was needed in any way. Each family lived exactly half an hour by car from Leatherhead in different directions. It was amazing.

By June, 1964, Louise came onto the scene and Kelvin had a little sister. He was three-and-a-half years older than Louise and was able to appreciate her. He seldom showed any jealousy towards her, but, instead, helped to look after her. It was interesting to watch his absorption in this new baby and he even helped with little chores. He seemed worried one day, when he discovered the baby had no teeth. Then, he would brighten up and say, "Never mind – buy new ones!" It was most amusing.

Two years later, in February, 1966, Michelle arrived and Wendy was delighted that she, too, had a daughter. All three granddaughters were very sweet and lovely. It was interesting to see them develop in their different ways.

Michelle in spring 1971.

The family seemed complete and I was so happy to have them all so near us. In just over five years, we had been given six grandchildren. We saw them all regularly. We were near enough for them to drop round whenever they wished. The garden was large enough for them to run around. I bought a freezer, stocking up food for the unexpected visit. The grandchildren's favourite diet at that time was fish fingers and ice cream!

Each Christmas, we had wonderful family gatherings. I enjoyed them so much as there was great excitement with the Christmas tree and the toys to be bought and wrapped. It was such joy to watch the tiny ones open their parcels and see their faces light up with pleasure. At one of our Christmas parties, we numbered sixteen. It was quite an achievement for me to prepare a Christmas dinner for them all on my own. On looking back, I don't know how I managed. I certainly couldn't do it now.

One of the events which stood out in our years in Leatherhead was the very bad winter we had, I think it was 1963. The whole place was frozen solid. Icicles hung from our gutters right round the house. The snow lay for days and days and into weeks. I had never felt so cold in all my life. The snow didn't melt till mid March.

Being at the end of a cul-de-sac, the snow piled up in the road because no traffic came our way. Luckily, I was still young enough to go out with a neighbour and together we worked solidly clearing our paths and the road, which led down to join the main road. We helped to clear our elderly neighbours' paths, too. I seemed to have so much energy in those days. I suppose the required strength comes in times of emergency.

K.C. continued with his work at St Ebba's Hospital. He was dedicated to his work and his patients. Whatever he sets his mind to do, he usually does it perfectly, at least to the very best of his ability. He had many grateful patients, who sometimes wrote to him. He was gradually promoted and, at the end of his ten years, he reached as far as Senior Hospital Medical Officer.

There is an amusing story he once told me. He often had to appear in Court in connection with his patients. One day, the Judge said to him, "I have been looking at your degrees, can you tell me what C.M.G. stands for?" "Sir," K.C. replied, "It is a decoration I received from the Queen." The Judge was very embarrassed as he never connected this decoration to K.C., who was, at that time, only holding a junior post at St Ebba's! After the court session, the Judge invited K.C. to his chambers to apologise for the mistake. K.C. assured him it was all right and told him how he had come to be holding a junior post.

By March, 1969, K.C. was nearing his final retirement. He would be sixty-five on the first day of April. He was keen to work on till he was seventy, but short of a locum post, the hospital could not keep him. He decided it was too much to be doing night duties and so reluctantly he decided to go. He is not a man of hobbies and his work had always been his life. I was a little worried as to how he was going to adjust to a life of leisure.

We discussed the future. The nest was decidedly empty and the house and garden were getting too big for me to manage. K.C. hadn't realised there was so much to do in the garden until he began to help me! This decided him that we must find a smaller home.

CHAPTER 27

Brendon Cottage Days

On the day K.C. retired, 1st April, 1969, Dick got his post as Surgical Consultant in the Hastings Group of Hospitals. Dick said to K.C., "Daddy, why don't you come down to Sussex to be nearer us? We have found a nice old house in Northiam with a little oast barn, which could be converted into a home for you and Mummy. We think we'd like to buy it."

We rather liked the idea and went down to Sussex to have a look. Tan House was very dilapidated and uncared for. A lot of work needed doing to it. The garden was completely overgrown. But Dick and I could see what the potentials were, though Yvonne and K.C. weren't too sure. The oast barn needed planning permission and was quite close to the house. I wasn't very sure it was such a good idea to be living in such close proximity to one's children.

All our lives, we have been determinedly independent. We had learned our lesson during the war that one had to fight one's own battle. I never approached father for financial help, even when we were starving and he was a wealthy man. So, we also feel now that we must not be a burden to our children. We have tried our best always rather to be a help than a hindrance to them.

Dick and Yvonne were very keen to get Tan House, so to help them, we loaned them the deposit on it until they moved in eventually and were able to sell their oast house in Sedlescombe. We looked around Northiam and found a tiny cottage, which K.C. chose – Brendon Cottage. It was a lovely three hundred year old cottage. The only disadvantage I found was that it was right on the A28. Luckily, there was a nice spacious garden at the back.

So, in June, 1969, we sold Nyetimber and moved down from Leatherhead to Northiam.

Brendon Cottage (1969-1979) through my garden.

Brendon Cottage had weather boarding in the front and a long sloping roof at the back. It had been saved from demolition by a couple we later met and then modernised by a chartered surveyor from whom we bought it. A garage was added on to it on the west side and above this was built another bedroom. On the east side of the cottage, a small dressing room and bathroom was added and below this was housed a two hundred gallon oil tank and a utility room, as well. There were two small bedrooms in the middle of the cottage, both facing north overlooking a lovely view, which stretched for miles. In February, I could sit upstairs and watch the first young lambs cuddle up to their mothers to keep warm. I always felt so sorry for them.

Stairs led down from the two little bedrooms, which was the old part of the cottage. There were lovely oak beams everywhere, but the doorways were low and often we would bump our heads if we didn't bend low enough.

There was another flight of stairs, which led up to the bedroom above the garage. Both flights of stairs met on a tiny landing, which led into the kitchen, which was like a ship's galley. It was about twenty-six feet long and only six feet six inches wide. At one end, it led to a cloakroom, which adjoined the garage. The kitchen door, which was extremely low, led out to the garden on the south side.

The kitchen window over the sink was very low indeed and I had to bend to look out into the garden. This annoyed me as when I had gradually built up a lovely garden, I couldn't enjoy it in comfort. So, later, we built on a sunroom, which also led into the utility room. This extension was a great success. I spent a lot of time in it when I wasn't working in the garden. We had our meals and family parties there, too. During our quiet moments, we could just sit and appreciate the peace and beauty of the garden.

The kitchen led on to the lounge and dining room, the latter of which was really only a hall to the front door. These rooms had lovely old oak beams and a large inglenook fireplace. The ceilings were low and, once again, tall people had to be careful. I remember my brother, who is tall, had to almost crawl around as he was so afraid of hitting his head.

The windows of the old part of the cottage were small, so it tended to make the rooms rather dark, but there was a lot of lighting to brighten things up on dull days. It was a warm little cottage and the heating was adequate. K.C. loved Brendon Cottage and decided never to leave it, "only feet first", he said.

Luckily, the front garden was quite small. I kept it simple as gardening in the front was not a pleasant pastime due to the traffic. I did, however, plant a mass of February Gold daffodils outside the front hedge. "To cheer passers-by," I thought.

The back garden, facing south, was different. On one side, there was a concrete slab with a metal cover and we discovered it was a well. I thought, “We must make a feature of this.” So, when we had the local builder round, I asked whether he could build me a little double circular wall with old bricks around this well. He also managed to find tiles to match the roof of the cottage and built a little roof over the well, supporting it by two old beams. We even found an old windlass.

I filled the hollow wall with soil and planted some beautiful alpines, some trailing, and other sun loving plants. There was colour throughout the year. Near the well stood the old framework of a swing the previous people had built for their child. It was an invitation to plant some climbing plants up the posts. I chose honeysuckle on one side and a clematis montana on the other. Dick had given me for my first birthday present in Brendon Cottage an old cartwheel. It fitted perfectly between the two posts of the swing and made a lovely picture.

Right in the centre of the back garden was an old apple tree, a Blenheim Orange. I was told it was well over one hundred years old. The trunk was gnarled with large bumps, which made it very interesting. We would just let the apples drop as it was difficult for us to climb the tree ourselves. Though the apples were never really perfect, they were beautifully juicy and sweet. Our Labrador and I would have a race to pick an apple up as soon as it fell. She loved apples, too!

There was also a greenhouse. In it we housed a large collection of cacti, which Bill and Thisel had kindly given us. I can’t say I really like cacti. They are a nuisance to handle and pot up and it always left me in a bad temper after working on them.

We had a smallish garden shed. It was always bulging as I seemed to collect more and more “garden things” as the years went by and my enthusiasm for gardening grew.

When we built the sun room at the back of the cottage, we incorporated a lovely York stone terrace with a low dry wall partly around it. This led on to a path, and then on to a little rockery. The path encircled the cottage.

I designed two borders in the back garden, one facing west and the other north; the latter we could see from our sun room. There was just the narrow border facing east, which followed the curved contour of the boundary of our garden. This made it more interesting. In this narrow border were shade-lovers like hydrangeas with beautiful bluey tints.

In the north facing borders was a lovely Magnolia stellata, which in the ten years we were there grew more and more beautiful. Not only were the blossom breathtaking in the spring, we had a bonus of lovely bright yellow leaves in the autumn. Magnolia stellata is very kind, she drops her leaves all at once and they rot very quickly, so it is comparatively trouble-free.

We had our compost heap behind the magnolia. I'm a great one for compost. Every scrap of kitchen waste is saved and I try to be very systematic about making compost. In the years I have been gardening, I can proudly say that I left the soil in a very much better condition than when I found it. That is why the plants always grow well for me.

In the rest of the border, I tried to plant shrubs as I knew I wasn't getting any younger, so had to think of trouble free plants. Also, I thought in terms of bird food and wild life. I concentrated on berrying shrubs and roses with hips. There were the viburnums and cotoneaster and buddleia, the latter attracting butterflies as well.

Beneath the shrubs, I packed the garden with spring bulbs and gentle ground cover plants. I divided the north facing border in half with a grassy path, which led to a little "meditation" spot which I had paved and a seat was placed on the little dry area. Here one could sit on one's own without being seen, or disturbed, it was sheltered and peaceful. It is surprising what one can do in a small space.

In the west-facing border, which was not as wide as the north border, I planted three most beautiful tree paeonies – the envy of even the connoisseur of nurserymen. They were exquisite when they bloomed, so fragile and delicate in colour, like a Chinese painting. Another beautiful plant we had in this border was a standard wisteria I had given K.C. for his birthday soon after we moved to Brendon Cottage. This was an outstanding shrub when in bloom. It needed careful pruning, but it was well worth it and each year it grew more and more breathtaking. The rest of the border was filled with other choice shrubs, including a lovely acer palmatum atropurpureum, the dark wine coloured leaves always standing out in contrast with the other shades of green.

And so the garden grew beautiful and mature as the years went by. Since K.C. had retired, he helped me in the garden and would often mow the lawn and clip the hedges with an electric hedge trimmer. He managed it for a few years until we both began to feel the need of help. So, Fred came to help us. He is Margaret's husband. Margaret came with the cottage, as it were, as she was helping the previous owners. I was very glad of her help and she was with us for the ten years we were in Northiam. Fred was still driving buses when he first came, so we were glad of any spare time he had.

Though K.C. had retired, he felt he still wanted to keep going. Someone approached him for help in Burswood, Dorothy Kerrin's Home of Healing, near Groombridge. So, for two years, K.C. did voluntary psychiatric work there twice a week. It was about an hours' drive from Northiam and often on his homeward journey he was so tired he had to stop the car and have a nap before he could go on. Eventually, when the two years were up, K.C. had to give up as it was proving too much and there were other ways he could help.

About the same time we moved to Northiam, the village had a new Rector, David Shacklock. He was a young man and with him came his wife, Gillian, with their little daughter, Joanna. Gillian was expecting another baby and not long afterwards Jonathan was born. They were a lovely young family and we took them to our hearts very soon. To us, they seemed to be like our own children.

David Shacklock is a very good teacher. He organised house groups and meetings where I learned more about the Bible

K.C. with David and Gillian.

than I had ever done. I have always been grateful for this. We had never been led as deeply into the Scriptures as we were led then and I believe that, together with Gillian, they helped me to become a really committed Christian. From then on, I knew I could completely surrender my life to Christ and to call upon Him for strength and guidance.

I suffered from deep depression a great deal during this period. It was Gillian, not the drugs, who pulled me through. She stood by me, counselling and encouraging me and teaching me to rely on God and showing me the passages of the Bible, which helped me a great deal and, to this day, I have a set of cards on which I had written passages of Scripture, which helped me through, always ready for immediate reference and strength. Gillian is truly a great friend.

With the Shacklocks, K.C. and I took part in many Christian activities. We attended church regularly and K.C. was elected into the P.C.C. We went to many meetings and K.C. helped in the village whenever he was called upon to do so. Some of the religious meetings took place in Brighton where we met Peter and Betty Kennard, who lived in Worthing, and so we spent many happy times with them in their home for a meal before these meetings. Our friendship has lasted until the present day though we've been unable to see so much of each other.

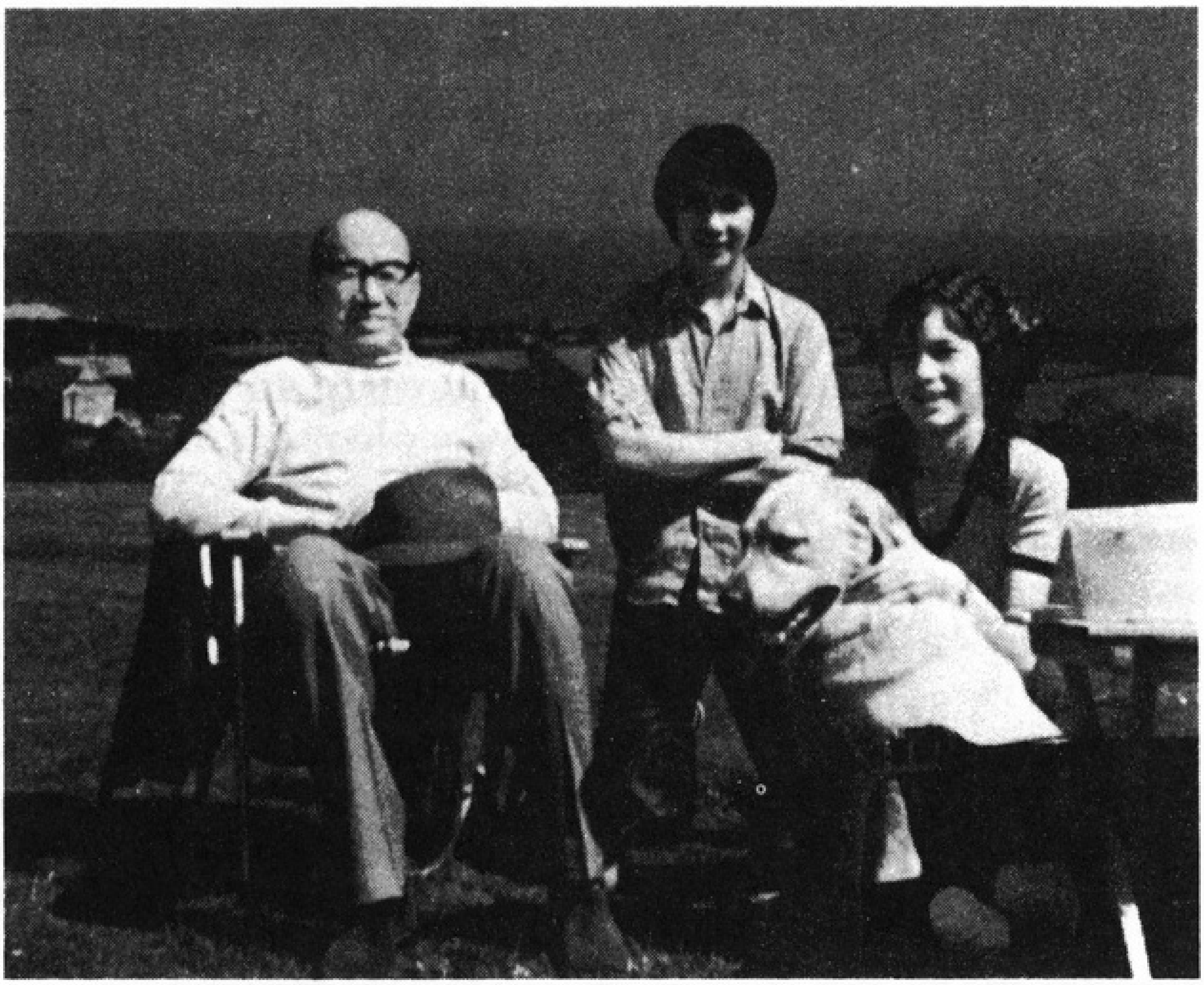
'Linda' relaxing at Brendon Cottage 1974.

I was kept very busy once again with the garden. I spent all my spare time and energy on it. This was, once more, a therapy for my depression.

There was a Nursery two doors away. This was the first place I would disappear to when I felt low. Hugh and Eileen Sandford owned it and it was good to go over for a chat and, inevitably, I would return home with a little plant and feeling better for the visit.

When we came down to live in Northiam, we brought our poodle, Tanya, with us. We had her since she was born in Nyetimber. Her mother, Topsy, came too, but unfortunately, she was very neurotic and later developed an incurable skin disease and had to be put down. But, Tanya was different. She was the best dog I ever had. She was a gentle, loving soul, but unfortunately, when she was only seven, she was run over outside Dick's home. She did not die immediately. I nursed her day and night for a week. The vet thought there might be hope that she would recover, but she died quietly one night. We were completely heart-broken and K.C. said, "We must never have another dog. I can't bear this heartbreak." We miss her to this day.

It was strange not to have a dog as I had had one all my life.



'K.C. picnicking with Kelvin, Louise and 'Linda' at Fairlight (1977).

In the end, I felt so lost without one that we bought Linda, a yellow Labrador. She was just seven weeks old and fitted snugly on to my lap as we drove her home. By the time Linda was six months old, we certainly felt she needed training. She had quite a will of her own. We knew we had to train her into some form of obedience, otherwise we would not be able to manage her.

So, for eighteen months, I struggled on, taking her all the twelve miles to Hastings every Wednesday evening for training classes. Even the trainers shook their heads and said, "You've got a tough one there!" But I persisted and, in the end, Linda turned out to be a wonderful companion and was no trouble at all. She grew up with all the grandchildren and they often played games with her, especially hide-and-seek. Either Simon, Kelvin or Christopher would hide behind a tree while on walks and I would say to her, "Where's Simon? or Kelvin? or

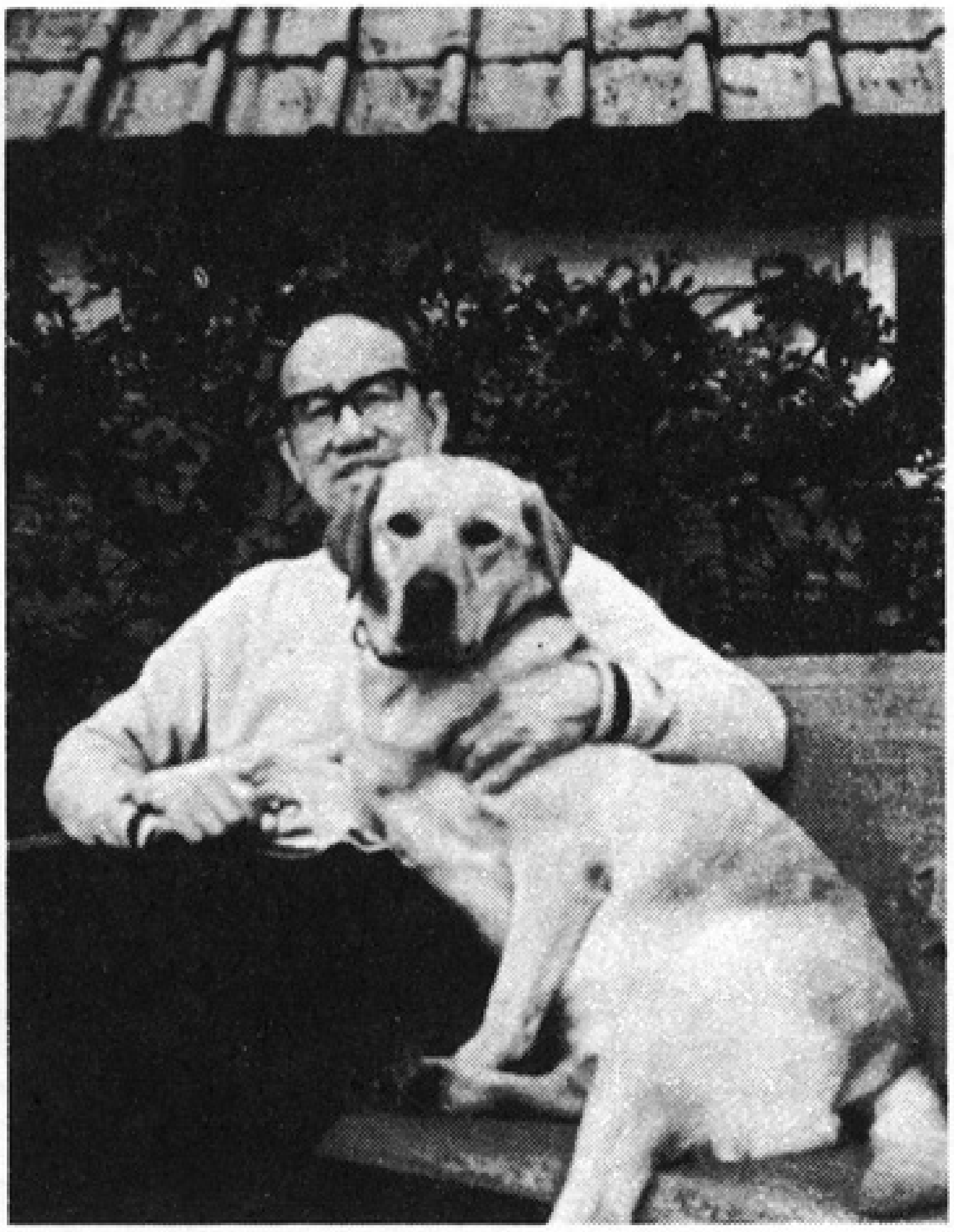
Christopher?" and she would go and look for them until she found them.

During these training sessions we met Eve. She was also training her dog, Meg. We made friends with Eve as did Linda and Meg. We met regularly and had meals in pubs once a week. We often went for picnics. She would fill the picnic basket with goodies and we went to many beauty spots together. She is the oldest friend I have in Sussex. Unfortunately, she is very frail now and is in a nursing home in Devon, where her sister lives. She is eighty-nine.

Linda kept us very active. We went for long walks with her, sometimes joined by Joanna, Dick's Dalmatian. She loved swimming and was an excellent swimmer. She could swim for miles out to sea and we would be so afraid she'd be caught in a current, or get cramp and not be able to return. She was also very good at retrieving. We would hide things and she would always find them. We had Linda for fourteen-and-a-half years.

Dick, Simon and Suzy with 'Joanna' (1970).

She left a great big gap in our lives when she died.



K.C. and 'Linda' resting at Brendon Cottage.

We were fortunate to have good neighbours. First of all, an elderly couple, the Wrefords, lived next door. Arthur did most of the gardening, so I got to know him better since I was the gardener too. We would sometimes chat across the hedge. He was most kind and helpful and each year he would offer me some of his geranium cuttings and plant them for me outside the hedge in the front. I was so grateful for this as it was a difficult bed to plant, sloping the wrong way.

Unfortunately, Arthur died not long afterwards and it was K.C. who found him dead and had to break the news to Edith, who couldn't believe it for a while. Later, she moved away to the centre of the village into a smaller cottage.

Our new neighbours were the Howletts, Les and Pamela. We became good friends. K.C. and Pamela often went to 8 o'clock Communion on Sunday mornings. I couldn't get myself up at that early hour as I was on medication for depression during that period, which made me sleep a lot. Unfortunately, we each moved away from Northiam later, but the Howletts kept in touch, even when we moved up to Cheltenham. Les died not long afterwards, but we still see Pamela now and then.

In 1972, Wendy and John were a bit worried as to where John's parents should move. They had been living in Bridlington, Yorkshire, and it seemed a very long way from

Christopher and Michelle growing up (1975).

Kingston, where John and Wendy had settled. John was their only child. They were keen to come further south to be nearer him, especially now that they had two grandchildren.

K.C. and I offered to help keep an eye on them if they should wish to move down to Northiam as John's father, Henry, was over eighty. Both John and Wendy thought it would be a good idea and John's parents agreed. So everything was decided for them to make the move.

It so happened that a bungalow was up for sale just a few doors from us. John thought it was suitable and the price reasonable. So negotiations were gone through and I made arrangements to have the bungalow redecorated and the garden tidied up before John's parents came down to save them the worry of all this upheaval after they moved in.

Everything was ready for them. They moved in towards the end of the year. K.C. kept his promise and we made them welcome, taking them out for drives and shopping whenever we could. "Menry" (as he was called), was always ready to go out. He was such a jolly person and was game for anything. Elsie was more reserved and was a little more difficult to get to know, but we tried our best.

Unfortunately, "Menry" became ill just five months after the move. He worried about his wife and K.C. assured him we would take care of her. And so he did. K.C. is a very loyal and faithful friend. After "Menry" died, K.C. was in touch with Elsie every day, either phoning her, or walking up to see whether all was well with her. We continued to take her out and she was our guest often when we dropped in at a pub for a meal.

But, things weren't going well. I sensed she wasn't happy and asked her about it, but she wouldn't confide in me. Then, one day when we got back from one of our short breaks, we found a board up in her bungalow. She had put her house on the market. We were hurt as she never gave us a hint she had intended to leave. She just told us that she had decided to go back to Bridlington. This was in 1975.

On the day she left, we asked her to come round after the removers had been, to wait for John to come and pick her up. At first, she didn't even wish to do that, but we went and fetched her. We didn't think it was a good idea to be sitting on a window sill to wait for John as all the furniture had been removed.

During the morning of Elsie's removal, Wendy rang us to say she had something to tell us. It sounded ominous. She said, "I'll tell you after John's mother leaves."

John arrived fairly late. After a cup of tea, they set off, John mumbling something like, "Thank you for taking care of my parents," to us.

I rang Wendy. It was a bombshell. She said, "John and I have decided to split up. He's in love with someone else."

"But, Wendy, why didn't you tell us sooner? At least, we could have given you some moral support?" I asked.

"It's no use, Mummy, I had to work it out for myself and make my own decisions." I felt so inadequate. It was a pity that in such a time of crisis we could not help our daughter.

K.C., of course, assured Wendy that he would take care of her and her children financially. All we could do was to listen and pray that time would heal. The divorce came through quickly. Wendy didn't want anything from John, except a clean break. This was in 1976.

After a year, we were delighted to find Richard on the scene. We could see how devoted he was to Wendy and gradually she regained her confidence and composure. They were married in August, 1977, and we had a much kinder and more caring son-in-law.

We met Richard's parents at the wedding. We had a happy day together. It is a great pity that Richard's mother died only a very short time afterwards, but in the little time we had together, I grew very fond of her. She would have been a lovely mother-in-law for Wendy. Richard's father we still see from time to time. He lives rather far away in Lancashire, but when we meet we always enjoy ourselves. He also is a very kind and appreciative person.

On 17th June, 1974, I well remember the date as it was Simon's birthday the next day, I had promised to take him shopping for his birthday gift. I also promised that morning to go out to collect money for the R.S.P.C.A. So, armed with my little tray of badges and the usual money tin, I set out. It was just before lunch and I had got everything ready, except to put the rice on the boil. "K.C., will you cook the rice and watch it doesn't boil over, please. I'm just going up the road to collect some more money for the R.S.P.C.A." "All right," K.C. replied and added, "What you won't do for your animals!" (K.C. dislikes going round collecting money).

I walked as fast as I could, going from door to door along the road. I was on my way back when I noticed a near neighbour just driving home in his car. I thought, "Good, a man, I can usually get more out of a man!" So, I decided to cross the road over to him. But a large lorry was coming from my right. I stopped to let it pass and then hurried over.

Unbeknown to me, the lorry stopped a few yards further on and so blocking the way to my left, where a car was driving towards me. There was no time to avoid it. All I could remember was the impact of the bonnet of the car on my left side. I bounced on the bonnet, rolled to the ground and was dragged along with my left hand under me. Then, all was still. I lost consciousness for a short while.

When I woke, I found people around me looking over me anxiously. Anthea Sutton, our opposite neighbour, a District Nurse, rushed to my side. She had just that moment returned home for lunch. She watched over me and would not allow anyone to shift me, even though I was in the middle of the road.

I felt the warm blood trickle from me as I knew I had a gash on my head and scalp wounds always bleed profusely. My hand was still under me and I couldn't move it out. Someone put a rug over me. I murmured something about calling K.C.

He soon appeared, absolutely shaken. "Who did this to my wife," he asked with a voice of thunder. I shook with embarrassment as I didn't want any scenes and K.C. was getting very emotional. A timid voice said, "I'm the driver." He happened to be someone living further up the road and his wife was expecting a baby. She wasn't with him at the time, but the baby arrived a week earlier due to the shock and worry that we might prosecute and claim damages from their insurance. "They've suffered enough," I said, "it wouldn't help me get better any sooner." So we didn't take any action.

We waited and waited for the ambulance. Altogether, it took forty minutes as it had to come from Bexhill. The Rye ambulance was on another call. In the meantime, I was truly holding up the traffic! K.C. asked someone to phone the Royal East Sussex Hospital, where I was to be taken, to contact Dick, who was on duty at the time. Someone said, "Get Dr. Yeo a chair." I sensed K.C. must have been turning green!

At last, the ambulance arrived. By then, the numbness was going and I was beginning to feel the pain. But the ambulance men were fantastic. They lifted me so very gently with a special cradle, which was slid under me. I felt like a feather. K.C. came in the ambulance with me, holding my hand. The men apologised for the age of the ambulance. The driver went at a gentle pace because the springs weren't too good and with each bump I winced with pain. K.C. held on to my hand, but I could see he wasn't feeling too good himself. The ambulance man very kindly suggested that K.C. sit back and that he would come to hold my hand. I was glad to have someone to hold on to.

When we arrived at the hospital, I was hoping to see Dick. But he wasn't there. I was taken into Casualty. A young nurse was in attendance. They had to cut my underwear away. I still remember feeling bad about it as I had only that morning put on a brand new girdle! It was a shame.

A young doctor came to examine the damage and take notes. I often feel it's such an ordeal for patients, who are suffering to have to answer all sorts of questions to fill forms. But, I suppose there must be a routine, and paper work has to be done.

Someone gave me an anti-tetanus injection and I was wheeled into Intensive Care. There was still no Dick. The injection caused an anaphylactic shock. Unfortunately, I had had an anti-tetanus injection not long ago. I began to get convulsions and cramps. Every muscle in my body seemed to be in spasm and the most frightening were those in my throat. I felt I was being throttled.

K.C. was called. He rushed to my bedside and I desperately gasped, "Pray for me, pray for me, I can't breathe." He held my hand and, as usual, his quiet manner and deep faith helped me through and gradually the muscles relaxed. K.C. said that I should have been given a small sensitising dose of the serum before receiving the full dose, to prevent the anaphylactic shock.

I spent the night in Intensive Care after going to theatre. I remember seeing Yvonne and vaguely Dick around. I was getting rather confused by then. They seemed most concerned with my hand, which had been "degloved". It was a mess. My femur was fractured. I remember the orthopaedic surgeon looking over me in the operating theatre, then all went blank.

In Intensive Care, I was in and out of consciousness, drifting off in a fitful sleep and coming round, helping other patients by ringing my bell for help when they needed it as I could reach my bell better than they could theirs.

Next day, I was wheeled into the ward on my special bed, where I was strung up with an intricate system of pulleys, cords and weights. I was on traction, where I was to lie for the next two- and-a-half months in the general ward.

I shall never forget Yvonne's kindness as she insisted that the Consultant should attend to me instead of the Registrar and she also had picked a lovely armful of flowers from her garden. I felt loved and was grateful.

It was a pity Dick was not able to be at Casualty when I arrived, if not for me, but for the sake of giving K.C. some moral support. All this was due to a mix up in the hospital. Dick *was* in the hospital, but was never given the message and they just said he could not be contacted.

I remember later Simon arrived to help wheel me into the ward. It was good to see him. But, I was so confused, I forgot that for a while and asked Dick a few days later why Simon hadn't been to see me – "had he not been told I was in hospital?" I blame any loss of memory from then on to my accident. A good excuse!

All the nursing staff were very kind to me. I was in a ward of forty. I saw the comings and goings. There was never a dull moment. In the end, I seemed to be the longest "resident". There were two other young girls on traction. We chatted to each other across the ward and exchanged notes. We often said, "What will happen to us if there were a fire, strung up like this and unable to be taken out of our beds!" Not long afterwards, there *was* a fire alarm and we were terrified – but it was only practice.

Friends were kind and visited me regularly, K.C. visiting me twice a day, driving the twelve miles from Northiam to Hastings. I felt the heat quite a bit and it was difficult lying in one position all the time – especially when I itched in an unscratchable spot! Someone gave me a back scratcher! I was also given a long rod with a "beak" on the end to pick up things I had dropped from the bed which was rather a high one. The nurses were so busy I couldn't very well disturb them.

It was during this period that I joined a Bible Research Group, which was starting in Northiam. I had hesitated for a long while as I thought it was too intellectual a pursuit for me and that I had no time to study. After holding out for many weeks (in spite of K.C.'s persuasion), I had to give in. I was convinced, at last, this was for me – I had all the time in the world.

The first meeting (we were to meet once a month) took place without me. I had to do my "homework" in hospital and prepare my work for Gillian to read out at the meeting. Gillian would take notes of what the others were contributing and let me have them. There were just a handful of us – K.C., David and Gillian and three others. A quiet group and we all worked very hard. It really helped me immensely and brought me into deeper understanding of parts of the Bible, which answered a lot of the problems of daily life. I shall always be grateful to David and Gillian for their help and support during these years.

Soon the day came for me to learn to walk. After a few days of gentle supervised exercise in bed to help strengthen the now emaciated leg, I was able to shift about, but I couldn't bend the left knee having had it in a straight position for ten weeks. I was given a zimmer and carefully I took my first few haltering steps. The physiotherapist took the zimmer away immediately and handed me a pair of crutches. "You can try and manage with these now – the zimmer is too easy for you." I clumsily started to move on the crutches, feeling rather unsteady, but gradually gaining confidence with each step.

In three days, the Sister announced I was to go to the toilet on my own. I gingerly sat up and fumbled for my crutches. The beds in my ward were rather close together. I managed to gradually slide the crutches in place as I got up. I took one step, my crutches slid on some powdered plaster of Paris, which was on the floor, (fallen, no doubt, from the plastered leg of my neighbour). There was a sickening thud and I was on the floor, the crutches giving me a bad jolt under my right arm.

I thought, "I've broken my femur again. It will be another ten weeks in hospital!" Nurses rushed to my rescue. They got me back into bed, badly shaken. My legs felt like jelly. The doctor came and examined me to see whether there were any broken bones. Luckily, there were none.

When K.C. found out what had happened, he was very annoyed. He rang Matron. "In future," he said, "would you please see that my wife is accompanied to the toilet until she is steadier on her feet. She must not fall again." He was thinking, "I couldn't face having to come along these twelve miles twice a day, every day, to see Florence for another ten to twelve weeks!" So, after a couple of days, he decided to take me home.

When I fell with the crutches under my arms, I must have wrenched my right shoulder. I was in terrible pain and it was agony to get up and down into a chair. I had to climb the cottage stairs literally on my bottom and was unable to get into or out of a bath. I spent six months in the physiotherapy department in Rye before I was able to build my wasted muscles up again. But, I was very determined and, in the end, I succeeded.

In October, we decided to take a holiday before the winter as we had missed out on our summer holiday. We booked in a farm in Exmoor. It was a most unfortunate decision. The accommodation was poor. It rained the whole of the two weeks we were there! I was frozen as there was no heating. I had to climb a steep flight of stairs to get to our bedroom and there was no attached bathroom. Altogether, it was a disaster for me. K.C. took me out in the car every day to keep warm.

During these weeks, K.C. learned all about the surrounding area. But, it was wasted on me. I was so exhausted that I slept in the car most of the time. I just could not keep awake. I had had no time really to convalesce after leaving hospital and I found the adjustment to the outside world difficult to make after lying in a hospital bed for ten weeks.

But, I suppose I must have made progress as I was driving the car (a semi-automatic) two weeks after I left hospital. Quite an achievement, I thought.

During the years in Northiam, we spent our holidays in Somerset and the New Forest. They are still my favourite places and I often dream about it. My memories of those days are happy ones.

We met our friends, Jan and Hilda, firstly in Brockenhurst and then in Minehead. From then on, we met many times again on holiday, spending happy times together. We still keep in touch with each other.

Another two friends we met on holiday in Minehead were Kathleen and Ina, whom we saw often when we lived in Cheltenham, as they lived in Worcester. We had good times together and spent many happy visits in their home, where we were royally treated with delicious meals. It seemed we had known them all our lives; we understood each other so well, sharing a common interest in gardening. They also admired Wendy's paintings and bought a large watercolour of hers in an exhibition.

By the end of 1978, Dick's marriage was breaking up. It was a tragedy. We suffered with them, but felt helpless. By spring, it became unbearable for us and, although K.C. was never going to leave Brendon Cottage, we decided we had to move away. Actually, just at that time, K.C. was suffering very much from a bad attack of shingles and had to be hospitalised. When he finally got home, it left him very weak and depressed, so he was not equipped to cope with Dick's problems.

CHAPTER 28

At Beverley Gardens

We put Brendon Cottage up for sale in spring we found a buyer in the first week. We moved up to Beverley Gardens, Woodmancote, Cheltenham in June, 1979. We found a chalet bungalow in a quiet cul-de-sac. It seemed ideal for us. The move took two days as it was so far away.

We asked Margaret and Fred whether they'd like to come up for a week with us for a "working holiday". They agreed and we had a lot of fun settling in. They were a great help and we settled down quite quickly.

Somehow, though, I seemed to have a premonition of the future. I could not explain why, on the first morning, on waking up and looking out of the window, I felt a chill in my heart. I shook this feeling off and didn't even mention it to K.C. "This is silly," I said to myself, "Here we are in a nice home, well situated, in beautiful country (we looked up into Cleeve Hill and beyond), it's sinful to feel this way."

There was a small garden in front and a larger, longer one at the back. The straight drive led to the garage and the front door led into quite a spacious hall. From the hall was the entrance to the lounge/dining room and two bedrooms. The smaller one we later converted into a beautiful bathroom/dressing room as there wasn't one downstairs. There was a spacious kitchen, which looked out on to the back garden. Upstairs, there were two bedrooms, one facing the front of the house, north, and the other facing south and the back garden. There was a bathroom, which also included a separate shower. Everything seemed quite spacious after tiny Brendon Cottage.

We joined our local church and began to make friends. The neighbours were quite nice on the whole, especially Barbara (Hancock) who would call round regularly to have a chat and do some shopping for us. We valued her friendship very much. We started a prayer group in our home. Mavis (our lay reader) introduced us to the others. So, once a week, we met with Estelle, Sonia and Pam.

We also took many drives around the glorious countryside. The Cotswolds are truly magnificent. The only disappointing thing was the fact that we found so many places fenced off. I remember in the days of our honeymoon, we were able to picnic anywhere we wished. We would just stop the car at any beauty spot and were able to get out, spread our rug on the ground in a field nearby and enjoy a picnic, of course making sure when we left never to leave any litter behind. But now, all this seems to be a thing of the past and it is very difficult to find a quiet spot for picnicking.

I began, once again, to clear, tidy, plan and re-plan the

Beverley Gardens (1979-1985).

Nicely settled in Beverley Gardens during Fred and Margaret's visit (1982).

garden – my third in this country. Each move we made, I learned a little more on how to make a garden and very soon it was transformed. We built a terrace at the back, near the house, where we could sit in the sun and keep dry when the ground was wet. There were steps which led down to the garden, which was a bit of a drawback, as we later found. The rockery, which joined the two levels, proved to be a success as it was nice and sunny and perfect for alpines.

There were a number of mature fruit trees, which was a bonus. We had a Williams pear, which produced excellent fruit every other year. The blossoms gave me as much pleasure as the fruit. Then, there was the greengage, which was disappointing, but, once again, the delicate white blossoms were beautiful in the spring. We also had a lovely Victoria plum and each year branches were laden with fruit, but, unfortunately, several branches snapped with the weight. There was also a Conference pear and a cooking apple, a Bramley.

The most interesting tree was a Salix Contorta, a twisted willow. The branches were lovely to see in winter, and exquisite when there was a hoar frost, they made such a delicate and intricate pattern. There were many other trees which gave the garden a sense of peace. On a hot summer's day, it was wonderful to be able to sit under the cool shade.

Unfortunately, once again, I was plunged into depression. It is such a helpless feeling and then often I had the sense of panic – unable to help myself. Only those who have experienced real depression will know how it feels. I tried to fight it, but eventually had to seek medical help and I had to have medication again.

But, very gradually, I recovered and was able to cut down on the medication because both K.C. and I didn't want me to rely on it too much. I eventually succeeded and I am so grateful that I am now completely "on my own" through the grace of God.

Our Labrador, Linda, came with us to Beverley Gardens. By now, though, she was getting very blind but soon learned to find her way around. She would go down the steps to the back garden, walk all the way to the end of the garden to a little patch I made especially for her and use it. She was such a good dog.

K.C.'s eyes were beginning to trouble him. Cataracts were forming. He consulted Dick as to what he should do about it and whom he would recommend for K.C. to consult. Dick suggested Mr Evans who practised in Hastings. It meant we had to come all the way down. But, one felt it was better to go to someone Dick knew. So, we came down to Hastings to see Mr Evans, who confirmed that K.C. had cataracts on both eyes. One eye was worse than the other. So, he suggested operating on the left eye first. The date was set for June.

Unfortunately, Dick was away at the time. He suggested we postponed the operation, but we felt we'd rather get it over with, having made all the arrangements.

I drove K.C. down to St Augustine's Hospital in St Leonards in June, 1981. The operation seemed to go quite well, but we soon discovered K.C. was allergic to many drugs and this became a nuisance. On the whole, the nurses were kind, but what unsettled and worried me was that I could not get any advice, or information, as how to take care of K.C.

After five days, he was discharged and was asked to come and see Mr Evans again in two weeks. Unfortunately, on the day we were to leave the hospital, the lift was out of order. I asked K.C. to wait at the top of the two flights of stairs with two bags, while I went down with the third to fetch the car round. When I got back, I was horrified to find that K.C. had already made his own way down, having *carried* the two bags! I feel sure this was the cause of his trouble later on. We were not helped downstairs, nor was he told what to avoid doing after the operation.

After I had driven him the long journey back to Cheltenham, breaking the journey over night at Wendy's in Kingston, we were both exhausted. I put K.C. to bed and after a while he felt better.

When the two weeks were up, we went down to Hastings once again. But K.C.'s eyes were still rather red and inflamed; he had had some pain a week after we got home, which was worrying. So, Mr Evans once again gave him an injection and he was then bandaged up with some ointment over his eye.

We spent the night at Dick's. At 3am, I was awakened by

K.C.'s groans. I sat up, switched on the light and was horrified to see him with his bandages off and his face swollen like a football. I panicked and all I could do was to waken Dick. "I'm sorry to wake you, Dick, but you had better come to have a look at your father." When he saw his Dad, he, too, was quite shocked at the sight. Evidently, it had been forgotten that K.C. was allergic to the medication that had been given to him.

Somehow, we waited till morning and Dick rang Mr Evans as soon as possible about his father's condition and, once again, he saw K.C. He apologised about the mistake and gave K.C. some medicine to relieve his condition.

I drove him back to Cheltenham, again breaking the journey at Wendy's. I was glad of her moral support for a few hours. It was a worrying journey and I was tired, not having had much sleep the night before. We were to wait another six weeks to see Mr Evans. K.C.'s new glasses would be sent on to him in Minehead. We were determined to get away for a break, as it was already getting into September.

We stayed in our favourite hotel in Minehead, the Northfield. The glasses arrived. I waited anxiously for K.C. to put them on. I expected a miracle, of course. But, he said he felt no difference in his sight. A few hours later, he excitedly said, "I can see better. I can see the lights across the bay." We were both very excited and thankful things seemed to be going well.

Unfortunately, after a day or two, K.C. said he was having trouble with the specs. By the time we got home, I was getting worried about K.C.'s eyes. "Why don't you consult an eye specialist up here? It's so much more convenient," I urged. So, K.C. at last went to a specialist in Cheltenham. He spent a whole hour examining him, at the end of which he said, "Well, Dr Yeo, I'm afraid I have bad news for you. You have a detached retina. I *could* operate, but I'd rather send you on to the retina specialist in Cambridge. He is good and really knows his job."

The shock was numbing and my stomach felt all churned up. We drove home in silence.

Soon, it was arranged that I drive K.C. up to Cambridge for his operation. A friend kindly gave me detailed instructions of the route, even with suggestions of stopping places for refreshment. It is a notoriously tricky cross-country journey. Everyone who knew we were making this trip said, "I don't envy you, it's a tedious way – don't get lost." This was all I needed. At sixty-five, I didn't feel like a cross-country driver and I was so worried about K.C.

We made the journey. It was in late October, 1982, and the days were short. K.C. was duly installed in his hospital room and I found a small hotel nearby, where I could get to the hospital easily.

I was very anxious about his having to undergo surgery again. He was allergic to so many things and would be so sick when he came round from the anaesthetic. But it wasn't too bad. The anaesthetist was kindness itself. He took me over to the next room after the operation and explained everything to me and told me K.C. had come through well.

"As to the operation of the eye itself, you will, no doubt, hear from Mr Scott. I did not see it so well, but I'm sure he will explain it all to you," he said. Instinctively, I felt all was not completely well. It was what was not said that worried me. But I thought, "It's just my imagination."

As it was with Mr Evans, I could not manage a word with Mr Scott until three days later, when we were leaving. I stopped him in the passage. "Mr Scott," I asked, "would you be kind enough to tell me how my husband's operation went? And, what is the prognosis?"

"Prognosis? What prognosis?" he replied.

"Well," I insisted, "May I know what my husband can do, or cannot do after this operation." He said, flippantly, "Anything, but stand on his head." I didn't think it was funny at all.

The journey home was very worrying for me. I drove at a slow steady pace, terrified I would give K.C. a jolt. Somehow, we reached home. I helped K.C. upstairs to bed. I thanked God for giving me the strength for the three-hour journey.

That very night, the trouble began. He was in agony. He tossed and turned in bed. The pain was so excruciating, he was almost screaming with it. He was certainly crying. I was frightened and suggesting calling the doctor. K.C. wouldn't let me till the next morning.

The doctor called after I phoned and prescribed some pain killers. K.C. was never good at taking medicines and often had bad side effects from most of them. This was no exception and nothing seemed to help alleviate the pain, not even going to the eye specialist, who also prescribed other pain killers. This went on for two months. K.C. was in agony all this time. He couldn't sleep and had lost his appetite. He had lost a considerable amount of weight. We were desperate. In the end, the specialist asked whether K.C. had tried acupuncture. He said, "No, but I'll try anything." So K.C. started a long course of acupuncture and very gradually the pain subsided. This was not till the beginning of the following year.

All this left us completely exhausted. I was not satisfied in not being told anything after the operation. I phoned Dick and asked him to write to Mr Scott for a proper report on his father's condition. The answer was given. Evidently, he could do little in the operation. He said he could not see the retina before, during, nor after the operation because the lens implant was in the way. This left us little hope that K.C.'s sight in his left eye would ever be better. It was difficult for K.C. to adjust to this news and it left him depressed for some time.

A little while later, he found a little white thread in his eye. The specialist, Mr Hart, managed to tease it out and it turned out to be over three inches long. We gather it must have been used to ligature around his eye ball. This must have accounted for a lot of the pain, which gradually subsided.

Slowly, K.C. recovered and regained his strength and I was able to relax. This was not for long as the appointments, meetings and social events crowded in. I sometimes wonder why our lives somehow always seem to be so crowded, while all I wish for is just to live in peace and quiet. But, I suppose one has to adjust to what life brings and not to rebel.

In December of this year, Kelvin was not himself at all. He was almost twenty-two. When he was fourteen, he was diagnosed as suffering from manic depression. It was a sad blow to us and we were quite worried about him. It seemed a shame that a promising young boy should be so handicapped. By the time he was in his late teens, K.C. (who had done psychiatry for ten years) noticed Kelvin was showing signs of schizophrenic tendencies.

Kelvin's was an unusual case of a mixture of manic depression and schizophrenia. He had mood swings and gradually his parents were having a more and more difficult time with him. He had treatment at the Maudesley Hospital in London and that helped a great deal towards stabilising him and to enable him to live a more normal life.

But, when Daphne and Bob had to move up to the Cotswolds, it was quite a different matter. During Kelvin's relapses, he had to go to Littlemore Hospital in Oxford. Here, I felt, they mishandled the case and Kelvin's mental state deteriorated.

Each week-end, his parents noticed he was getting worse and still the hospital did nothing for him. They did not keep him long enough in hospital to stabilise him. We were very worried and anxious about the whole situation. This went on up and down for another whole year.

The highlight of 1982 was our trip to Scotland with Wendy and Richard and our Labrador, Linda, in August. It was a very happy two weeks we had. We broke journey for a night in Hawkeshead in the Lake District. It was so beautiful. It brought back happy memories of our youth when we drove all round the area trying to see everything, as usual.

I remember the first morning I woke in the Lakes, I quickly got dressed for breakfast and went to Wendy and Richard's room to see if they were ready. To my surprise, Wendy had already painted two watercolours from the window of her room of the lovely view. (I still have these two paintings on my wall framed as a pair. It gives me constant pleasure and refreshment

Enjoying some winter sunshine with Wendy at Beverley.

to gaze at them). After spending a leisurely day there, we made our way north early next morning. We had booked a log cabin by the lakes in Strathyre, Scotland, near Callander. After a long day, we got there just before dark and settled in quickly.

I remember there was a stream nearby and a waterfall. I'll never forget the day K.C. fell near the stream. His eyes were troubling him as he couldn't judge his steps very well. He tripped among the rocks and literally somersaulted over them. I quite expected him to have cracked his head, but, as usual, he was good at knowing how to fall, having been a good gymnast in his youth. He got up unscathed.

We also nearly lost Linda. She was so keen on swimming, she went out into the stream too far and was gradually dragged down towards the waterfall. Luckily, we managed to rescue her but only just in time.

After a week in this lovely quiet haven, we continued up north to Kishorn to visit Percy Smith and his present wife, Gillian, where we spent two nights. They have a peaceful place

Derby and Joan at Beverley Gardens (Summer 1983).

up in the wilds of Scotland. Percy took us for a lovely drive to see the beautiful country.

We knew Percy in Hong Kong when he was our very young Rector in Kowloon Tong. We became very good friends, helping his first young wife to settle down in a strange country. She was also expecting her first baby. We have kept up our friendship ever since and he writes regularly. Of course, he has retired now.

Altogether, it was a lovely holiday. Richard and Wendy did most of the driving, so I was able to relax and enjoy the scenery. It was a real treat for me.

We had another holiday that year in Minehead for four days. We found the short holidays quite a nice break and less expensive. So, for the next two years, that was what we did, alternating between the New Forest and Exmoor. Later, we discovered the cottages in South Wales, near St Davids. These were extremely enjoyable holidays, too.

In October of this year, Dick's divorce was finalised. It had been a long drawn out thing and we were glad it was all over. He had had a rough time and we, as parents, worried with him.

By December, Brock, our Border Terrier, was born. We had been thinking of another dog to be with Linda, who was ageing. We felt also that it wouldn't be quite such a blow if, when Linda finally had to go, we had another dog to take her place. In a way, on looking back, I wonder whether it was such a good thing for Linda, but I think eventually she and Brock became friends.

1983 seemed a busy time for us. We had got involved with two groups of Christian meetings. They were both time consuming and often I would feel very exhausted as I still had the house and garden to take care of. But, K.C. was very keen and since he had no other hobbies, this became the focus of his life. I went along with him, but, to be truthful, I sometimes wished we could just stay at home.

Our Golden Wedding Anniversary and K.C.'s eightieth birthday.

Celebrating our Golden Wedding with K.C.'s neices and nephews.

On February 25th, Brock came to us. He was brought up by Dick and Jenny and her daughter, Nettie, as Brock was bred in Sussex. Dick and Jenny had now decided to get married.

The highlight of the year was our Golden Wedding Anniversary. We were determined to celebrate it. So, we asked our Godson's twin sister, Jasmine, to organise a Chinese meal in Soho. We invited our immediate family, which included K.C.'s nephew and nieces and Grace and her family. One or two very close friends were invited, too. We had three tables of ten and a happy time was had by all. This was before the actual date and just as well, too, as I managed to come down with 'flu by the 24th.

In April, Kelvin had another relapse and his parents took him to Maudesley for a consultation. All this time, we did not feel he had any backing from the specialist in Oxford.

By June 18th, it was Dick and Jenny's wedding. We all came down to Sussex for the blessing in the Church in the Woods, in

Hollington, near Hastings and later to the reception in Fairlight. It was a lovely sunny summer's day.

We were booked for our holiday in the New Forest, so after spending the night in Fairlight, we started off early for Brockenhurst. It was a very hot day and hotter in the car. Poor little Brock, who was only six months old, had heat stroke at the end of the journey. He was very quiet right through and we thought, "isn't he good." But, when we arrived, we found he was foaming in the mouth.

We had to get the vet as Brock was getting convulsions, as well. The vet came and bundled him off, and for the next few days it was touch and go. We thought we had lost him. But, he recovered and we were so relieved. We had to be very careful with him from then on and when we got home we took him to our vet for another check up.

In July, we all congregated at Shirley and Tony's garden to celebrate their Silver Wedding Anniversary. It was a very hot sunny day, but it was perfect in their lovely spacious garden in Feldon, Hemel Hempstead. Their two boys, Nicholas and Julian, did their part and looked after us all very well, serving drinks and helping with the serving of the food, too. It was a very happy family reunion indeed. Little did we know that a very dark cloud was hanging over them.

In less than a month, Julian, Shirley's younger son, was killed in an accident. He had fallen from the parapet of a clock tower in Bath one evening. It was a cruel shock to his parents and we, ourselves, could hardly take it in. Grace and John had lost a grandson. It was so tragic, as Julian, just twenty-one, had everything to live for. He was doing extremely well in music in Sheffield University. He had a bright future ahead of him. But, all this was shattered.

Actually, Shirley and Tony have taken it well. She works hard at her profession. She is now an orthodontist and Tony is also a dentist. They are both also very active in their church. A young curate, who strangely is very much like Julian, shared their grief at the time and was a great spiritual support to them. It is

Family and friends celebrating Shirley and Tony's Silver Wedding (1983).

strange how God draws His own unto Himself. He never fails to comfort and sends the right person to the right place at the right time.

In September, we had another of our short five-day breaks in Minehead. It was a very welcome change before winter set in. It also reinforced us for what was to follow before long.

Margaret and Fred had come to spend a week with us on a "working" holiday. They had done this once a year since we moved up to Cheltenham. Margaret would help me in the "big" house jobs, while Fred would help in the garden. It was a good arrangement. We paid their fare and they were our guests. We also took them out to see the surrounding country, while they gave us some invaluable help. It worked out very well and we got on splendidly.

Well, after they left, I was busy the next day washing and generally putting things in order. Everything was tidy now. I was feeling very tired after a very active week and had been on my feet most of the day. I said to K.C. at about 9 o'clock, "Let's have an early night, I'm exhausted." I started making my way up to bed.

The door bell rang. "Oh dear, who on earth could it be at this hour?" I sighed. I opened the door and there was Kelvin. "Goodness, Kelvin," I exclaimed. "Why are you here so late at night? How did you get here all the way from Oxford?"

"I've come to see you, Granny," he said. "I took a train to Moreton-in-Marsh and a taxi from there."

"Goodness, that must have cost you some money," I remarked, letting him in. "Next time, you must let me know you're coming. We could have been away and how would you have got in then?" I added.

"When did you last have a meal?" I asked after he'd said "Hello" to Grandpa. "Not since lunch, I'm hungry."

"I'm afraid I haven't much, except some left overs in the 'fridge. There is a bit of cheese and some cold meat," I said, as I began to take the food out for him. He was famished. "Take your time, Kelvin," I told him.

"Are you staying the night?" I asked. "Yes, please," he said. I began to make up his bed. Then, instinctively, I added, "*And* no smoking, please." I did not know why I said it. "I haven't brought any cigarettes," he replied.

I cannot explain the feeling I had then. It was a foreboding I could not shake off. I quietly went upstairs to make a few phone calls to three of our prayer partners. "Please pray for us as Kelvin is spending the night with us and I'm rather worried."

I must explain, at this point, that during Easter the same year, Kelvin had gone to his parents also by taxi at night and had been quite violent with them, attacking both of them, after ripping out the telephone. At the back of my mind, I think this had been worrying me. His condition had been deteriorating.

But this night in October, he was quite normal and held a very normal conversation with his grandfather. We needed to have no fear.

And yet, I had to phone my prayer partners. Two of them said, yes, they would pray for us and for me not to worry. I could feel they thought I was over-anxious. But, Sonia was different. "I'm 'phoning Dick and Wendy to let them know Kelvin is with you."

"What good will that do?" I said.

"Still, it's better they know in case they want to contact you," she insisted.

In a short while, Dick rang and advised us to call the G.P. to see whether Kelvin was all right and, perhaps, he might need an injection if he couldn't sleep. "We can't do that, Dick, not on a Sunday evening. Anyway, Kelvin seems quite normal at the moment," K.C. assured Dick. Wendy also 'phoned to see whether we were all right. I assured her we were, only so tired, all I wanted was to go to bed.

K.C. made sure Kelvin had a couple of sleeping tablets before we made our way upstairs. "Take these if you can't sleep, Kelvin." "All right, Grandpa." These were his last words.

Brock and Linda both slept in my room across the landing from K.C.'s room. K.C. and I had been restless and disturbing one another at nights, so I thought it would be better for me to sleep in the other room and, anyway, we always left our doors open. That night, we both shut our doors.

Just after 2am, I was woken by a strange smell. In my state of half-wakefulness, I could not register what it was. In seconds, it dawned on me – it was the smell of smoke. I shot up and opened my bedroom door.

I remember, Brock just would not settle that night. He was only nine months old and I was still house training him, so he slept in a basket around which I had placed a wire screen. I took him down to the garden in case he was having a tummy upset, but he was all right. So, up we went again and I said, rather crossly, "Go to bed and don't disturb me." He didn't make another sound and when I took a peep at him later, he was just lying on the floor and wouldn't go in the basket. He usually loved his basket. He has never been in it since.

Thick acrid smoke came belching in as I opened the door. I coughed and held my breath, at the same time rushing into K.C.'s room. He was still asleep, "Wake up, wake up," I said as I shook him. "What's the matter?" he asked, sleepily. "Fire – phone 999." He grabbed the phone and started dialling.

I knew it was a fire because, as I dashed across the landing, I looked down the stairs and flames were already licking the curtains and lower steps of the stairs.

When K.C. got through, I heard him tell the Fire Brigade the telephone number. I got impatient and snatched the phone from him and said, "You must give them our address" and started to do so when I heard a click. I knew the phone had been cut, so I hung up.

I was desperate. We had not been able to get through to the Fire Station. I must get help and phone again. I opened K.C.'s windows and shouted and called for help, but no one heard me. It was October and the nights were chilly, so everyone had their windows shut. I looked down and contemplated jumping. There were some conifers below and I thought, "It *might* break our fall." But the thought of another long hospital stay was too much and I put the idea out of my mind.

I tried three times to get down the smoke-filled stairs and was beaten back each time, choking with the smoke (we had polystyrene coving in the hall and the curtains were made of similar material, as they were special "draught-free" ones. Nothing was left of them, except a five inch bit of tape). The flames were increasing and it was getting unbearably hot.

I was desperate to get down. I knew time was running out for us. In a last effort, I had a brain wave – the large bath towel in the bathroom. I soaked it immediately, with both taps running at once. "Come on, K.C., get under it." I had grabbed Brock under my arm, but Linda refused to move. She could not see as she was blind and I knew it was useless to try to shift her as well. I managed to have the presence of mind to close the door.

K.C. crouched under the wet towel with me and we somehow slithered down the stairs together, trying to keep low – not that that mattered. The thick smoke filled the whole stairway.

We got down to the little landing of the stairs, which was already on fire – So were half a dozen pots of African violets in flame. I remember being so fascinated at seeing this – being amazed that living plants could be blazing so well. It's strange how the mind works.

I had on a pair of woollie socks as I had been having a lot of night cramps. But, K.C. was bare-footed as he had had no time to put on slippers. So, I was saved being burned, except my socks were scorched, but K.C. had to walk on the burning carpet with his bare feet.

When we got down to the front door, K.C. very unwisely tried to open it. But it had a metal door knob – it was red hot! Also, the double glazed door had burst and left glass lying about. K.C. screamed – his hand was burnt on the door knob, leaving his skin on it. At the same time, he stepped on splintered glass. He fell over into the hall and immediately, Brock also struggled out of my arms and jumped on the floor, disappearing into the smoke.

I left K.C. lying in the hall and ran out towards the kitchen. I knew he would be safe there as the fire was licking its way up the stairs. Later, a fire ball shot up the stairs, cracking the skylight above and burning up the lamp shade hanging in the landing just above where we were standing. We were lucky to be alive.

When I got to the kitchen, I found the back door open. I knew Kelvin had gone. I ran out to get help, thinking that the Fire Brigade had not been alerted. In my nightie, I crossed over to my opposite neighbour. Once again, I found it strange how the mind works.

This neighbour had once said to me when we first moved to Beverley Gardens, "Don't hesitate to call on me any time you need help." I made a bee-line for his house. I could have gone next door, or to any of the other neighbours that I, perhaps, knew better.

It seemed an eternity before he came to the door in a daze. It was 2.30am in the morning, I just said, "Please ring 999 –

Fire!" He said "Where?" I couldn't believe he could be so dense. I said, "Look at me – where else?" I must have been black with soot.

He rang 999. I ran back to my house. I found K.C. lying on the lawn. He had somehow managed to stagger out. He was covered in blood. By then, miraculously, the fire engine had arrived. It seemed sufficient to have just given the telephone number because the address could be traced from it.

Someone gently picked K.C. up. I saw his feet – dripping with flesh, skin and blood. I shuddered and said to myself, "Wheel chair for life," then put the thought way back into my mind.

Very soon, a fireman carried Linda out in his arms. She was safe. I ran into the house again and again. "Brock is trapped somewhere. I *must* find him," I said to myself, choking each time I went in. "Look, my dear," said a fireman, holding on to me in the end, "You must not go in again. It is too dangerous. We will try to find your puppy."

Then, someone called, "Look, there's your dog. He's run out and is off down the road." I sighed with relief and joined K.C. across the road at another neighbour's, where we waited for the ambulance and police. While we waited, I remembered my promise to Sonia to phone her should there be trouble, which I did. She had not slept and picked up the phone immediately. I told her what had happened and that Brock was missing.

We didn't wait too long. As usual, the ambulance men were wonderful. K.C. was bundled in blankets and we made our way to Cheltenham General Hospital. We arrived in Casualty at 2.45am On the way I was questioned by the Police, who came with us, about Kelvin – his general appearance. I described to them as best I could as to what he was wearing. Somehow, I knew from the moment I saw the flames downstairs that it was poor sick Kelvin who had set fire to the house.

In Casualty, we lay side by side. The nurses saw to K.C. as best they could. The usual details were taken – name, address, next-of-kin, etc. I wished it had not been necessary to go through this, but, of course, they had to. They wanted to phone

Dick in Sussex. I said, "No, not at this hour. Let him sleep. He has a heavy day on Mondays and a long operating list. Don't disturb him. There's nothing he can do now."

The doctor came, he must have been a Junior Registrar. A very young man, indeed. Later, the orthopaedic surgeon also turned up. I wondered why he should be called, even in my hazy mind. I was right in the end – they should have called a burns specialist.

By 3.30am, Sonia turned up with a reassuring smile. It was so good to see a familiar face. She reassured me that Brock had been found. He had run on to the main road and then dashed into someone's garden. Sonia's husband, Mark, (who was used to photographing wild life, spotted Brock at once). Sonia said, "As soon as I came up to him, he just lay on his back as if to say, 'I give up, I'm not running away any more.'"

Soon after this, the young doctor said to me, "Mrs Yeo, I think we really should phone your son. It is now 5 o'clock and he would have had sufficient sleep." I looked at Sonia and she nodded. She was looking at K.C., who seemed to be in a bad way. (I couldn't see him as we were lying side by side). She nodded her head, "Let us phone Dick, he should know now," she said gently.

It seemed Dick and Jenny, having been alerted the night before, weren't surprised by the phone. Immediately, Jenny got up and was in the car by 5.30am. She drove up right away to Wendy's in Kingston to pick her up and together they made their way to Cheltenham. They were with us by 9.30am. I didn't ask what speed Jenny was travelling! It was good to see them.

I didn't mention earlier that Daphne and Bob, Kelvin's parents, were away in Yugoslavia at the time, so could not be contacted immediately. They lived within eighteen miles of us in Blockley.

When Jenny and Wendy got to us, we had already been transferred to a crowded ward. K.C. was placed near the door and I was squeezed into a corner of the ward somewhere; there was so little room. I felt sorry for the other patients because there must have been quite a lot of commotion.

All the rest of the early hours of that morning, I spent holding on to an oxygen mask. I found difficulty in breathing and the oxygen relieved me very much. I dozed in between, knowing that K.C. was being taken care of and there was nothing I could do. I relaxed, trying to build up some strength for what was to follow.

All the next day, there was a continuous stream of nurses, doctors, friends, our rector and an interview with the police. Events merged into each other. The police questioned me for a long time. K.C. was too ill and in too deep a state of shock to answer any questions. Half way through, the policeman was called to the phone. He came back and I asked, "Is anything wrong?" He answered, "Oh, it's nothing, it's about another case." Actually, he didn't want to upset me, but it was a phone call from the police who were in our home. They had found a large carving knife where Kelvin had been sleeping.

I was shifted to be near K.C. next day. His bed was right near the door in this large ward. It had turned cold. The ward was draughty, with people coming in and out. K.C. was still suffering from extreme shock and could not stop shivering, even when blanket after blanket had been piled on him. Evidently, hot water bottles were not allowed in hospitals. I pleaded with the nurses to find something to warm him up. Eventually, a foil blanket was placed over him and he gradually relaxed.

Wendy stayed with us all day. It was comforting to know she was there while Jenny did the running around, though K.C. kept on asking where she was. She managed to deal with the police at home, get our toilet things – in fact, she bought most of the things, including a nightie for me and pyjamas for K.C. Everything in the house was covered with thick grimy soot. Kelvin had used cooking oil to start the fire.

Jenny also bought Kelvin a change of clothing while he was on remand. (They had found him a few miles away). The police had to question him about what he had done. It is so sad when one is mentally ill. Kelvin was a different person. He was suffering from paranoid schizophrenia and felt he *had* to do what he did to us because he was deluded. He was convinced we were going to harm him, so we had "to be done away with". He had been very close to us all through his young life, spending many of his holidays with us. He admired his grandfather and often asked how he became successful as he was keen to be a success, too. But, that night, it was *not* our grandson who did this to us.

K.C. was delirious for two days off and on. He was going to get out of bed, "To get you a cup of tea, Flor," or "To take you shopping." I had to watch him as it would have been disastrous if he had got up and stood on his poor feet. Wendy stood by the other side of the bed and together we managed to pull up the side rails as the nurses were too busy to see to him.

There was quite an amusing incident while I was in hospital. The newspapers were full of the story. K.C. was, of course, eighty years old then and they said I was seventy-eight. One of the patients said to me, "You look remarkably young." "Do I?" I said, feeling rather pleased. Then I went to the toilet and happened to look into the mirror. I couldn't believe my eyes. I *did* look young! My hair, which was grey at the time of the fire, had turned a jet black! Not only that, it was all singed and it look as if I had the modern "Afro" look! I couldn't help smiling to myself. It was only after many shampoos that it regained its true colour.

Dick had a very busy day on that Monday of the fire. His operating list was long and, after that, he had a clinic. It wasn't till 7pm before he called off work. He took a train from Hastings, but it was such a tedious journey that he didn't get to the hospital till after midnight. He stayed with us for a while, then went on with Jenny to Sonia's home.

Dick met the orthopaedic surgeon the next morning and explained to him about his father's sensitivity to anaesthetics and that he was allergic to various drugs. It was agreed that when K.C. was sent to the operating theatre to see what to do with the foot that was so badly cut, they would give K.C. only a local anaesthetic. Dick said good-bye to us and had to dash back to his work in Sussex.

K.C. was taken to the operating theatre. I waited in suspense. It was arranged by Dick that K.C. would be removed to a private room after the operation as he was feeling the cold so much in that corner of the ward. Also, he was having no rest, it was so noisy.

When they, at last, wheeled him out, I was surprised they had taken him back to the ward. There was no room ready in the private wing and they had had to give him a "general" after all. The anaesthetist saw me to explain that the wound in his foot was so bad they could not clean it unless he was under "general". He told me that it was as long and as deep as his two fingers and could not be stitched. I shuddered.

By the next day, they had arranged a room for K.C., but it was freezing cold as the heating wasn't working. By now, I had left hospital, so was able to visit him. I felt very worried about him and that his treatment didn't seem to be going very well. The nursing wasn't particularly good. I would never advise anyone to go to a private room in a general hospital. Somehow, the staff seem to resent the patients and certainly the best are not chosen to work there.

The days drifted on. K.C. had been in hospital for nearly two weeks. He was getting no better. In fact, I think he was deteriorating. What worried me was that he was made to *walk*. It was sheer agony for him. He could not even dangle his feet down without extreme pain.

One day, K.C. meekly suggested to the orthopaedic surgeon, "Do you think it would be a good idea to consult a 'burns man'?" "Well, perhaps it is," he thought. "I shall try to get in touch with the burns unit in Bristol, I know the consultant in charge," he added. There was no burns section in the Cheltenham General.

The last two days before the burns specialist came to see K.C., I felt that he was reaching the end of his life. I was extremely worried. He looked terrible – ashen grey, glazed eyes and would not even take a teaspoonful of food. I usually ate his left over meals as I had no time to eat elsewhere.

When I left hospital, I had no where to go as our home was impossible to live in. The soot and stench were unbearable. There was a black grime, which was settling more and more on to the furniture and walls. I wasn't sure what I was to do. But, God once more sent His angels.

Kathleen Hughes sent me a note while I was still in hospital. Her house was open to me, "Come and spend a few days with us. Think about it," she wrote. So, I took up her offer gratefully and the next nine days I spent with Kathleen and Brian.

They made me feel so welcome and safe and loved. They gave me all the moral support I needed. Kathleen spoilt me with breakfast in bed. I was awake at the crack of dawn. This enabled me to do some paper work in peace and quiet. There was so much to see to. There was the insurance, the assessor, the builders, the bank, etc., etc. All this needed correspondence and appointments to arrange. It was amazing how I was given the strength, wisdom and guidance I needed. I was buoyed up with hidden strength.

The day consisted of a visit home, with phone calls to make, (in the end, we realised the main line wasn't cut, after all. Kelvin had cut the extension line). For the first week, I would wash one load of washing a day. The laundry room was separate from the rest of the house, so it was comparatively clean. But, the work seemed insurmountable. Someone suggested sending the clothes to the laundry and cleaners, "the insurance company would pay". I had never thought of that! So, from then on, I packed all the linen and clothes for the laundry and dry cleaners.

While I was staying with Kathleen and Brian, I did not bother about lunch. As soon as I had breakfast, I dashed out, picked up the mail from the village Post Office, made my way home and, as I said before, sorted the mail and made the urgent phone calls. I did some more sorting. Sometimes, I would meet up with the assessor, or the builders, whom I had to deal with.

Spring in Beverley Gardens with Kathleen and Brian (1983).

I found it most difficult dealing with workmen. Somehow, they tend to take advantage of women!

As soon as the essentials were over, I would dash to the hospital to be with K.C. I did my best to see to his needs, perhaps, having picked up some shopping on the way to the hospital. I was able to be present during his lunch to help cut up his food and coax him to eat. He didn't have much appetite.

Each day, I stayed with K.C. in hospital until evening.

Sometimes, I was able to get a decent meal out with friends, or our Godson, Victor and his wife, Marilyn, who, when visiting K.C., took me out a couple of times for a good substantial meal. It was good to have some moral support. Victor really rallied round and was very helpful and supportive in many ways.

In the evening, usually quite late, I would return to Kathleen's. She would wait up for me, even when I told her not to. She was a good listener as I told her the day's events. She was a true friend and a tower of strength and encouragement. Brian, of course, I got on with very well. He was a nurseryman, so we had a common interest. Their daughter, Mary, was also a great help in spite of being a very busy person.

The assessor for the insurance was extremely kind and helpful. I suppose he sensed the tragedy of the situation and tried his best to assist me. Under his direction, all carpets, curtains and upholstery had to be replaced. I left all the decisions to him, explaining that I was not a greedy person and would never dream of claiming for anything, which was not damaged.

But damage there was. When the fireman told me, "You will find more damage with smoke than fire," I did not believe him. But, convinced I was as day after day the smoke settled more and more on to everything and even got into drawers and polythene bags which protected our clothes.

To come back to K.C., whom I had left at his lowest ebb. The burns specialist saw him the next morning. He said, "Remove the dressing immediately." K.C. was then given some other dressing, which relieved him right away. When I returned to see him that day, he seemed brighter and in less pain.

An ambulance was arranged to take him to the Frenchay Hospital Burns Unit in Bristol. I went along with him, especially to learn the way there. I was a little anxious how I was to find my way with the fast M-roads and the many junctions near Bristol. I felt confused, but knew I *had* to make it. It was a nightmare journey for me every day as the days were so short in November and the weather always seemed to be wet. I drove in the dark coming home and often would be so exhausted I would doze off at the wheel. I had to pull up on the hard shoulder and catch ten minutes sleep. I did not care even if the police caught up with me.

By this time, I had moved on to Greystones (a Home for the Elderly). This was the first time I realised I was getting elderly! It was a lovely home, run by a retired doctor and his wife. It was tastefully furnished and all comfort and care was given. There were only about eight rooms. There was a good mid-day meal, and the table, which was shared, was always beautifully laid, with sparkling glass and silver. In the lounge was an open fire where one could sit and read.

Unfortunately, I could not enjoy this luxury. My days were spent rushing around re-making a home and visiting K.C. in the various hospitals.

Because I could not stay for the mid-day meal, sandwiches were made for me and I gobbled them on my way to Bristol. I had promised I would visit K.C. every day at 2pm and stay till 5pm. He was very lonely, indeed, in Frenchay Hospital, except for Victor (who was living in Bristol at the time), who very kindly visited him every evening after work to see that all was well, and if there was any shopping he could do for K.C.

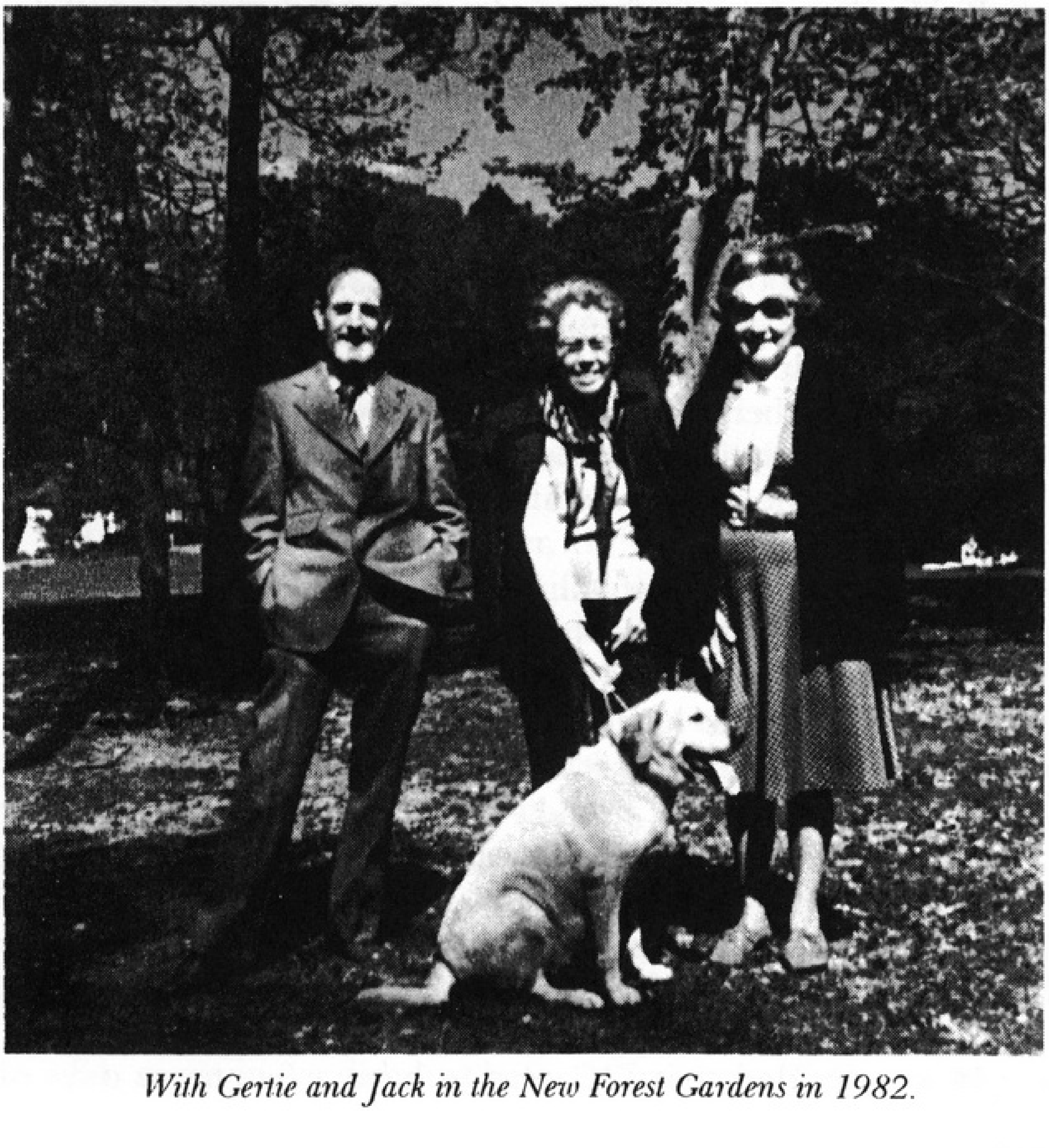
But K.C. was fortunate to have a good Sister (Margaret), in charge of his ward. She gave him back the will to live. She was caring and would also tease him to fight for his life. She was the one, (after the surgeon had taken the thigh skin off his inner thigh), who was left to graft the skin on to the soles of K.C.'s feet. She did a magnificent job and soon the intense pain subsided.

The main thing now was to wait for the graft to take and for K.C. to rest up and regain his strength. He still had to lie flat on his bed. The sister gave him an air mattress. There was no question of sitting up. He stayed in Frenchay Hospital until the beginning of November, when he was moved to Winchcombe Cottage Hospital, which was much nearer Greystones.

During all this period, our friends rallied round. I felt uplifted with their love and prayers. Dick and Jenny made periodic visits up to us, but it was so far for them and Dick's time was limited.

Among the many friends who rallied round during this period were Gertie and Jack. I have known Gertie since I first started school at four-and-a-half, which means a friendship of nearly seventy years. She and her husband helped me in numerous ways and they were always available when I needed support. It is a pity we live rather far from them now.

The one person who was my greatest help was Wendy. She and Richard, on their second visit up, tried to spend the night in Beverley Gardens. This was while I was still in Kathleen's



With Gertie and Jack in the New Forest Gardens in 1982.

home. Wendy phoned about 11 o'clock that night and asked where I had put the garden beds. "It's impossible sleeping in the house, we're choking. I thought we could sleep in the garage." As soon as Kathleen heard this, she said, "Nonsense, they must come here. We can put up two camp beds in the little room for them." So we arranged the beds and somehow Wendy and Richard squeezed into the little cottage. What better friend could one have? On another occasion they slept at Mavis's home.

I leaned hard on Wendy. Whatever decisions I found difficult to make, I asked her. She had a clear head and a decisive mind, especially when seeing to the refurnishing of our home.

Pickfords came to pack up and remove all the contents of the home and placed them in their store. This had to be done before the professional cleaners came to wash down the walls.

At first, our friends thought they could all help in the cleaning up process. But, I was glad that in the end professionals were called in. They knew what they were doing. The cleaning of the walls took two weeks, then the walls had to be sealed as the stench of smoke just hung about the house.

Wendy helped in the decision of colour of paint and wallpaper. By then, I couldn't care less what was used. Then, there was the decision of carpets and curtains and so it went on. Poor Wendy, she made so many trips up, sometimes by coach alone to save driving.

At Winchcombe Hospital, K.C. made progress slowly. He was asked to start dangling his feet from the bed. This was only for five minutes at a time. It caused him much discomfort as the blood would rush to his feet. During the first attempt, his feet turned black. I remember it so well as Dick was visiting him and Anna, too (our devoted friend – a physiotherapist – from near Stratford-on-Avon). They were worried. When I saw his feet, I had to use all my self control not to show K.C. my feeling of horror. We thought gangrene had set in. Anna was so upset, she wept. I had no sleep that night. I prayed that God would intervene.

It was decided that K.C. was to have a few more days of complete bed rest and then to try the dangling process again. This was better and soon he was able to sit in a chair and then, a few days later, to stand and to make his first steps with the help of the physiotherapist.

By the middle of December, he wanted to join me in Greystones. The Matron wasn't very pleased about it and said he wasn't ready to be discharged. But he was determined to go and he joined me in Greystones. Of course, it was a relief to me to be able to stay quiet for a few days and not have to make hospital visits. But, I still had to go to the house and supervise the workmen.

What I remembered most about this worrying time was the fact that the builders sent me a bill at the end of each month; unfortunately, I couldn't pay it until the insurance company had paid us. I was frantic with worry. Each day, I would dash to the Post Office to see whether the cheque had come through. The postmaster got so involved with my problem that he was almost as anxious as I to know whether the money had come through! The builders had threatened to stop work unless I settled the bill each month. Eventually, I appealed to the assessor, who took over the responsibility., "I shall deal with the builders in future, don't you worry any more, Mrs Yeo. Just refer them to me." He was kindness itself.

By the middle of December, the walls were ready and so were some of the paintings, (mainly Wendy's), which had been cleaned and restored. So, Wendy and Richard came up to help hang them.

On the 20th December, Pickfords moved our furniture back. Some needed upholstering. Others had to be cleaned. I was hoping that I would be able to get everything ready before K.C. returned. But he was getting anxious to be home for Christmas.

It was a pity that the carpets hadn't been properly laid. There were still bare boards about. Nothing was yet in place as Pickfords had very naughtily just emptied the tea chests and left everything stacked about in the kitchen and lounge.

So, move in we did, just before Christmas. K.C. was happy to be home and I tried not to be too disappointed. I had had dreams of him stepping into an orderly home with everything looking nice for him. But, he didn't seem to mind. I had to be very careful he did not trip on the rolled up carpets and other things strewn all over the floor.

Unfortunately, it was a disastrous Christmas. Dick wanted me to drive K.C. down to Sussex to spend the holiday with them. He and Jenny had booked a party for the "oldies", which he couldn't cancel. I said to him, "No way can I drive your father down all that way. He couldn't possibly keep his feet down for such a long journey. And, anyway, I'm dead tired."

Wendy, of course, felt she had made enough trips to us. She always likes to have Christmas in her own home. "You are very welcome to come to us," she added. But it was impossible for us to contemplate travelling.

Daphne was still getting over the shock of what had happened and said to us, "We're not having a Christmas meal, but if you feel like it, you are welcome to come and have tea with us."

But, K.C. and I decided to order a capon for Christmas Eve and invited Daphne and Bob to join us for a meal.

On Christmas Day, I developed sciatica and could hardly move. For two days, I was crippled with pain and we were entirely on our own.

I'm a very sentimental person, I suppose, and special days mean a lot to me. I get very emotional and then depressed. I just broke down and wept during those two days. I was so frustrated because I couldn't move. Poor K.C.! What a Christmas for him! We felt so lonely and lost.

Dick and Jenny came up on the 27th and spent two nights with us. I was very grateful for Jenny's help in clearing the kitchen. She helped me put the things in the cupboards. We also went out for a meal, which was nice.

Well, now that we were back in our home again, I was determined to try to settle down once more. Our Rector came to bless our house. A few of our friends, who had been involved with helping us joined in a simple Communion Service. We hoped this would restore the sense of peace after all the turmoil.

By this time, a place was found in Broadmoor Hospital for Kelvin, where his condition could be treated. We were grateful that, at last, there would be the proper psychiatrists to help him. We understood how Daphne and Bob were feeling, but wished we could have shared more of our heartache together.

The next few months somehow became sadder and sadder. I didn't seem to be able to settle down. After the initial "excitement", friends seemed to think we didn't need any more help. But reaction was setting in on me. I suddenly came down with depression. I felt deserted. I began to feel ill. There was a tightness and pain in my chest. I felt extremely tired.

K.C., by now, had recovered sufficiently to gently "potter" about. I still had to take him a number of times to Gloucester Hospital out patients' clinic to see the surgeon, who had been in charge of him at the Burns Unit in Bristol. When, eventually, K.C. saw him for the last time, the surgeon said to him, "Well, Sir, you are a very lucky man to have your feet." We thought so, too, and thanked God for his healing. This ended a period in our lives, which taught us patience, forgiveness and full reliance on God's strength, help and guidance.

The following February, (1984), we were very shocked indeed to get the news of John's (Grace's husband) death. It was so sudden. He had not been ill. We could hardly take it in. Our hearts went out to Grace – not another tragedy so soon after the loss of her grandson the year before. John had been a wonderful supportive husband to Grace. To us, he could not have been a kinder, more understanding and helpful brother-in-law. He seemed to sense things without my having to explain anything to him and whenever we needed any practical advice, he would always give us his time. I felt so very sad.

By the time of our wedding anniversary in late March, we felt we could try to make the journey to Brockenhurst in the New Forest for a week. We didn't do much there, but it was good just to get away. And, in May, we went away for another week to a rented cottage in Wales.

Though the driving was a bit strenuous, it wasn't too far and the change was good for us. I suppose we felt time was running out and we wanted to make the most of things. So much so, that in July we were away again for five days in Minehead. These three places were my favourite haunts. I miss them now as we never go so far. It's more difficult to get to them from Sussex.

Unfortunately, by now, my chest pains were growing steadily worse. My doctor was not helpful at all. He showed a strange reaction towards me. After two visits, once when I was very depressed after our return home and, again, when we were worried about my chest pains. He was not kind, in fact, he was most unsympathetic. I was determined not to see him again.

K.C. got in touch with Dick and an appointment was made with a medical consultant in Sussex for August. The diagnosis was angina pectoris and I was prescribed tablets for it.

In September, my niece, Min, brought her son, Peter, over from America to study in Cheltenham Junior Boys' Preparatory School. Peter was only nine and extremely shy. I felt so sorry for him as I could still remember my days of being a boarder at school. His home was so far away, and the English spoken in England is so different from that in America.

I took to Peter. I suppose I identified myself with him and with what he was to go through in the next few months. We promised Min to keep an eye on him and have him home on his exeats every Sunday.

In November, Daphne and Bob decided to move down to Rochester, in Kent. They had found a lovely home overlooking the Medway. They were looking forward to moving away from Gloucestershire as they had never really settled. Bob had been transferred to Woolwich in his work.

At Christmas, we were invited down to Dick and Jenny's for a large family gathering and it gave us a good chance to catch up on news of our grandchildren. They were all grown up and were young men and women, each different and interesting in his or her own way. I was just content to sit back and watch them all.

While in Sussex, we visited some of our old friends of

Northiam days. It was so good to be able to see them and to catch up on their news. They seemed to be growing older, too, and I wondered whether they saw any difference in us. I must admit I was beginning to feel old for the first time. I was a little homesick for Sussex.

On our way home, we visited Wendy and Richard and spent New Year with them. It was nice to be able to break our journey there. We enjoyed the New Year celebrations with them, especially as we were able to have more time to chat with Christopher and Michelle.

I did not start 1985 well as I had the continuous chest constrictions and pain. It was quite crippling. From being a very active person, I found it frustrating not to be able to get on with normal living. The attacks were getting worse. We had a

On holiday with Peter and Mary (Edmunds) at Minehead (1984).

freezing January and February and this aggravated my condition.

In February, we thought it would save me worrying about entertaining Peter if we were to take him down to Minehead for his half-term. We had five lovely unseasonably warm days. Mary Edmunds, who had just been widowed, came along as our guest. Her husband had been our Rector and we had become good friends. He visited K.C. often when he was in hospital.

We went to a Bed and Breakfast place, which was run by Paulette, a French lady, who is a friend of Wendy's. She had this lovely home on the slopes of Minehead, just above the town. It was an ideal place for us as it was so homely and informal. We all had a marvellous happy time together.

CHAPTER 29

Back to Sussex

By the end of February, 1985, I was feeling so unwell and K.C. was quite frail, too, and finding great difficulty in walking. We began to think in terms of a retirement flat, with a Warden. We heard about one from Dick, who had a friend in Westfield, Sussex. They were converting their Manor House into flats. I felt it might be an idea to come back to Sussex as my heart was still there. It would be nearer the children should there be an emergency and they would not need to travel so far to see us.

So, in March, we went down with Wendy and Richard to see the flat. We quite liked it and started our negotiations. Unfortunately, there were hitches and we didn't think I would be able to cope with the expense of the maintenance and service charges should I be left on my own. So, we had to find somewhere else.

While all this was going on, we had put our home in Beverley Gardens on the market. There was no trouble selling it, as, once again, we had a beautiful home and garden to sell. But, we had to find something pretty soon as the buyers were keen to move in. Stacks of particulars were sent up to us from the various house agents in Battle, because it was around this area that K.C. wished to settle. It would be near Dick.

One of the first bungalows to come up, "Uplands", is our present home. K.C. said, "I think this sounds right for us. Let's ask Dick to go and have a look and see what he thinks." Soon, the reply came, "It's quite good, but the kitchen seems a bit messy."

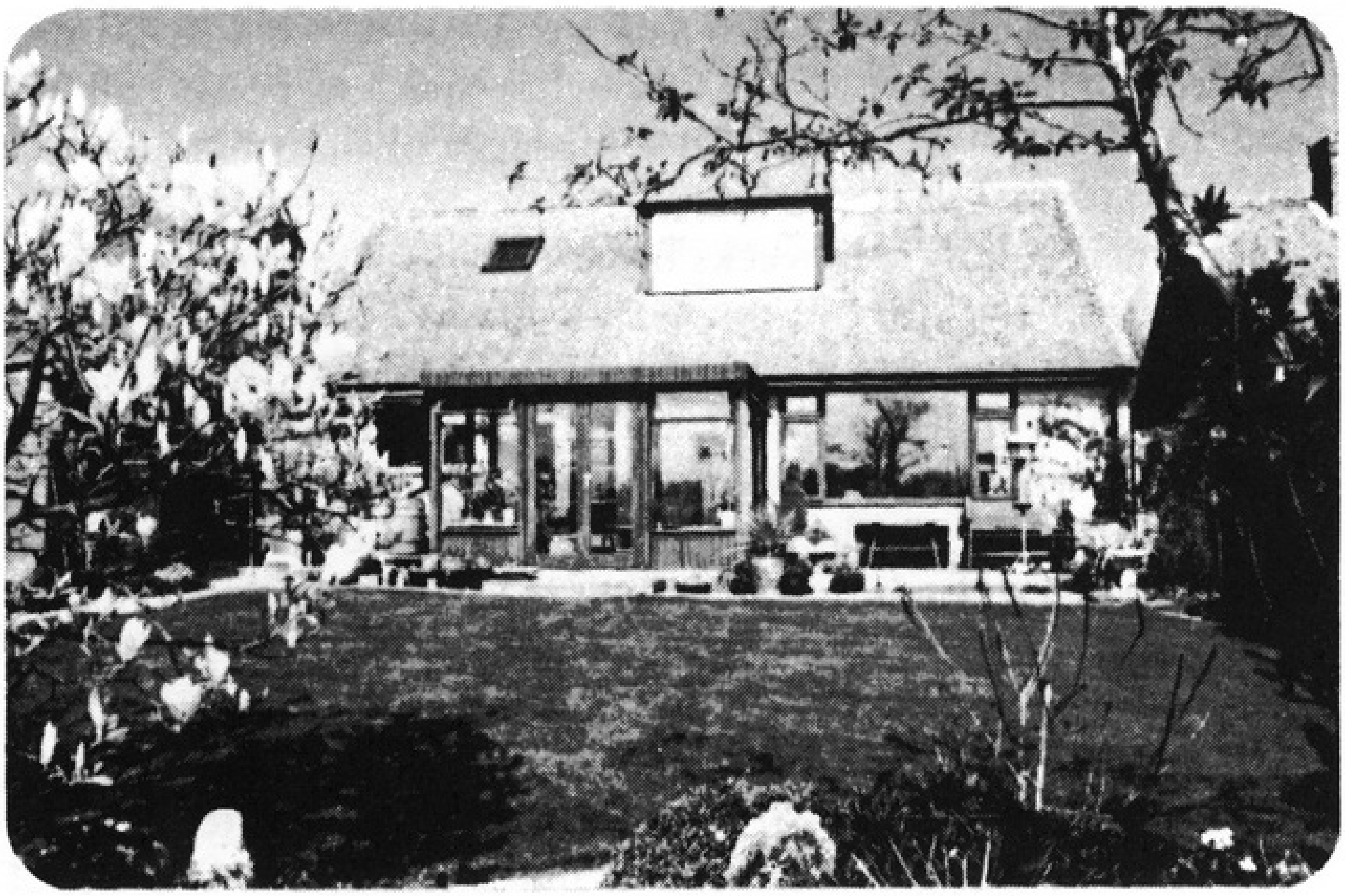
That was an understatement! When we saw it eventually, we found it was in a terrible state. Belinda had driven us down from Cheltenham. In spite of being a very busy person, Head of a Primary School, she had always come to our rescue whenever we were in need. She is the daughter of the Macleans, friends who live in Northiam and we are distantly related. We had taken the journey down to Battle in a hurry as someone else was interested in buying the bungalow. We didn't want to miss the chance of getting it!

Luckily, I was able to see the potential through all the dirt and grime. I liked the feel of the place. The views were lovely. The garden was a wilderness, but being the person I am, I could visualise what I could make of it. And, I wasn't afraid of the work which it would have entailed. So K.C. offered the full price. In those days, one had to make decisions quickly when one bought a house, or it would be sold to someone else right under one's nose.

This was in April; of course, our solicitor then made the usual searches and paper work and contracts were exchanged. In May, I started making arrangements for moving. There was sorting out to do. I arranged for the packers to deliver tea chests and bit by bit I packed up my china, books and bits and pieces. Two friends, Barbara (Brookes) and Gerry (Oversby) came in turn once a week for half a day to help me. Barbara (Hancock) and Anna also came whenever they could spare the time. I did it slowly, but steadily. By now, I was quite experienced in house moving. I managed somehow to get it all done.

Meanwhile, Dick was a great help from the other end. He arranged for workmen to do the various jobs which needed doing. The house was practically re-built. The central heating, including the boiler, had to be changed. The electrical wiring had to be renewed; plugs put in. Many windows needed replacing. And so it went on. The workmen promised to have it ready by August 6th, my birthday. I thought it would be a good day to make the move.

In May, we had the bad news from Dick that Jenny had to have an operation. He was very worried, so were we. She had the operation in London. It went well, but, unfortunately, everyone had a bad scare when she developed an embolism and had to be rushed from the private hospital to Barts and remained in the intensive care unit until she was out of danger. We were so relieved she had been saved because it would have



Magnolias in bloom at Uplands in 1986.

been shattering for all concerned. She was young and strong and it was amazing how quickly she finally regained her health and energy.

We came down to see our future home, "Uplands", in June to check on how the workmen were getting on. We had quite a lot of alterations done. The front porch was extended. The two bedrooms were knocked into one. The bathroom downstairs was completely changed. Upstairs, we found space for another bathroom and Dick discovered even more space for a store room.

Carpets were chosen with Wendy's help. We were able to use our present curtains, which was a blessing. So, all seemed set for 6th August. There was a bit of a panic in the end as the workmen were unable to keep to schedule. We moved in in spite of this as we had had everything arranged.

It was such a long distance that the removers had to take two days to get down. They spent the night somewhere on the way and were ready to move in the first thing next morning. We had to have two vans – one for the furniture and the other for my garden things, including two sink gardens, which I could not part with. There were wooden benches and a table and all my assortment of garden tools and some large tubs, which held my favourite plants!

It rained solidly two weeks before the move and two weeks after. But on the day we moved in, it was sunny. I was truly thankful. But the removers were rather naughty. After taking in the furniture, they just placed all the tea chests in the garage and left! Luckily, once again, Fred and Margaret came to the rescue. We could not find the essentials for the kitchen to cook with. It was Fred who eventually located the important chest right in the middle of all the other tea chests! How grateful and relieved I was!

We settled in as quickly as we could. I had promised to make a home and create a garden in record time for K.C. I started at once.

There was still much to be done in the house. It was a test of patience to have workmen in and out for weeks afterwards.

Meanwhile, we had Mr Potter. He was a gem and incredibly strong and he began straightaway to clear the jungle, which had once been a garden. The first thing he did was to dig up the nettles and brambles, which covered the whole of the back garden. There was hardly a thing to be saved, except a mature Magnolia and a Prunus autumnalis. There were also four large conifers.

Grace came to pay us a visit at the end of September and she and I spent hours clearing the ground elder. This needed a lot of patience. We also planted mauve crocuses on the lawn. It was good to work with her. Later, Avril, who had come to help us, finished off the ground elder with me. It was hours and hours of patient hard work.

Carole, another of my helpers, came on Monday mornings to clean and polish. She still comes regularly each week.

Before we had decided to move, we had booked to take Kathleen and Brian for a holiday in Wales. This was to say, "Thank you," for giving me a home after the fire. We wanted to keep our promise, so we packed up and drove all the way back to Cheltenham to pick them up and together we went to Wales. Their daughter, Mary, and Kate Golding joined us, as well. Kate was our district nurse, Mary Edmunds also came as our guest.

We had booked a lovely spacious cottage on the edge of the cliff by the beach at Whitesands, near St Davids. It was a wonderful holiday. We all got on so well together. Brian is very fond of the sea, so it was ideal for him. Each day, we went down for a walk along the lovely white sands. Brock was with us and so was Kate's terrier, "Peggoty". They had good times together running madly along the sandy shore.

Kathleen was very happy. She was enjoying herself so much. How often K.C. and I had said to one another, "Thank God we made the special effort to take them to Wales", in spite of the fact that we were so tired after the move. But, it was a holiday for us, too. Kathleen went down with cancer in November and died early the following year. What a loss – to her family and to all her friends. Her home was open to everyone. We had had most of our prayer meetings there. I felt so much for Brian.

As soon as we were more settled, we got in touch with a few old friends from Northiam days – Freddie and Jennie Martin, Eve, the Coopers and Belinda's parents and a few others further away, like Peter and Betty in Worthing. It was good to see them again and to feel they were living nearby.

In the autumn, before the cold wet weather set in, I planted most of the main shrubs I had decided to put in. Mr Potter had made paved paths around the back garden to enable me to get to the compost heap and around the back and front of the border. I had chosen our favourite shrubs and, between them, I grouped masses of spring bulbs.

I tried to ensure there would be colour the whole year round and the shrubs were placed in a strategic positions to show their shapes and colour.

With Avril's help, we built a small rockery and I then planted my favourite alpines and two or three dwarf conifers.

The soil was lovely compared with what I had had to work with in the other gardens. It was a light loam and, in the four years I've been here, I have improved it even more, adding my own compost, as well as peat and sand wherever they were needed.

Rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias do well here, so I went to town on these. I planted many of my favourite clematis – Montanas, Alpinas and the various summer and autumn flowering varieties. Then, berrying shrubs for the birds, like cotoneaster and skimmia, also shrub roses with hips and two sorbus trees were also planted for the birds; unfortunately, the red berries on the trees don't last more than a couple of weeks, but the yellow ones, "Joseph Rock", last a little longer. I planted two crab apple trees: K.C. chose one for the back garden and the other, my choice, in the front. These produce flowers in spring and ornamental fruit in autumn and winter; they are also enjoyed by the birds. I planted hybrid tea and climbing roses, but kept them to a minimum. Roses entail a lot of work and I had to think of old age creeping on.

In the front, I kept the garden simple, with heather, dwarf conifers and hardy shrubs. I also put in a young Prunus autumnalis as K.C. loves this tree. We bought a Magnolia stellata, a favourite with us, and a weeping Salix (Pussy Willow). This front garden has been a success and trouble free.

By the end of the year, most of the main structure of the garden was completed. I had worked extremely hard to make a garden as quickly as possible for K.C. It was just as well I managed to get so much done. This included treating the lawn for weeds. It was already beginning to look like a lawn.

In December, I suddenly developed intense pain in my chest and was really ill for two weeks. I had pleurisy. The pain was quite bad. I felt so weak, it was difficult to get moving again.

I was very grateful during the days of my illness for our opposite neighbour, Joan. We had given her our house key very soon after we moved in. She was a great help and dropped in each day to see how I was and did whatever shopping I needed. She is still a great help, keeping an eye on Brock should we have to be away too long and coming over to let him out for a run and to give him his meal. Joan and Bert have lived in these parts most of their lives and are true Sussex people.

Gradually, I started work again to sort out things in the house so that I would be free to work in the garden in the spring.

We joined our village church in Netherfield. There was only a small congregation struggling bravely on. The church needs a lot of repair and frequent sales of work and coffee mornings are organised to help re-build it. Unfortunately, the hurricane of 1987 did so much damage, it took more than a year to put it right enough to hold services again.

From 1986 to 1988, my health deteriorated and I found myself less and less able to tackle the jobs I used to take for granted. In fact, I felt very unwell. An appointment was made with another consultant and, after many tests, it was decided I should stop my heart tablets. My blood pressure was getting too low. It was discovered my lungs had been damaged by the smoke during the fire in 1983.

And, what of holidays after we moved down to Sussex? Well, we went to the Isle of Wight with Grace and Louise in July, 1987. We had an enjoyable time together and both Grace and Louise seemed to benefit from the break. Brock came along, too, and he had the best time of all. We even managed to do a little walking up on Tennyson's Downs. It is a beautiful island. This was to be our last holiday so far away. We now have much shorter breaks, very close by, as K.C. is not keen for me to drive long distances.

The only other break would be a journey to Wendy's once a year for a week or so. We enjoy that very much because Wendy tries to take us to some of our old haunts, like the beautiful Isabella Plantation in Richmond Park during azalea time and a walk along the river, which K.C. adores. Then, we always visit Wisley and the area around Leatherhead and Box Hill. There is also the lovely Claremont Landscaped Gardens (National Trust), which suffered quite a lot of damage from the hurricane, but which still gives us great pleasure.

Our first spring at Uplands; enjoying a cup of coffee with Barbara and Wendy in 1986.

During 1986 there was a happy occasion. Christopher was marrying Barbara. It was so exciting – one of our grandchildren was getting married! Time seemed to have flown. It seemed such a very short while ago that we met Christopher and Wendy at the airport and he was lying contentedly with his bare feet kicking about in the little wicker basket.

We all drove up to North Wales, near Denby. Barbara comes from a large family and, because her father had died, it was her brother and sister-in-law who were managing the wedding reception, though Barbara did a lot of the organising herself. It was a large gathering. K.C. gave a little talk in the church where they were married. It contained many helpful thoughts and blessings for the young couple's future. A video was taken of the ceremony. Richard played the organ and Nettie, (Jenny's daughter), sang beautifully.

Later, we all went on to the hotel, (where we had spent the previous night), for the reception. It was all very well organised and Barbara was radiant. Christopher also conducted himself well and gave a good speech. He was amazingly selfpossessed. There were a few other speeches and toasts. We all had a good time, and that evening we had a cosy family celebration in Barbara's brother's house.

As I mentioned previously, we had a hurricane in October, 1987. It was terrifying, as it happened in the middle of the night, though, of course, it meant that fewer lives were lost. There was no warning at all from the weather forecasters.

I felt the house would be blown apart as I slept upstairs in the little dormer room. With each gust, I literally felt that the walls would be blown outwards. I wasn't far wrong: when, next morning, I found that the whole side wall of our neighbour's had been sucked outwards. It looked like a doll's house, exposing what furniture was left in the upstairs and downstairs rooms, the rest of the smaller objects having been strewn all over the garden.

K.C. and I spent the night upstairs mopping up the rain, which was pouring in down the window panes. By then, our carpet was soaked and the water had seeped through to the ceiling of the rooms below. Bucket after bucket we filled, carrying it together to empty it into the bath. Towel after towel was soaked along the window sill. We could not catch the drips with buckets as the rain was just sliding down the inside of the window panes. In the end, we lined the sill with plastic ice cream containers. It's just as well I'm such a hoarder – something always comes in handy!

Next morning, we went out into the garden and found our electric cable lying right across the front lawn and the drive, blocking the garage door. It was a large cable and very heavy and I suppose it was dangerous to handle.

Suddenly, I broke down. It was all too much. I suppose I was cold and had had no sleep the night before. I just could not face another traumatic experience so soon after the fire and the house move. I could not carry on, looking after the house, the garden and K.C., who has never been the same active person that he used to be. I felt close to giving up altogether.

We went into the house again. The electricity was cut. The house was getting cold as the central heating had gone, too. I snapped back into my usual resourcefulness, thanking God for His strength.

We put on extra clothing. I got out my tiny picnic GAS cooking equipment and lit it to heat some water. Luckily, I had a gas "coal effect" fire installed when we came. We lit it and kept it going most of the time. I always feel so cold when I'm in a state of shock.

The water was dripping down into the lounge by then and I was really worried the ceiling would collapse on us as we slept in the lounge the next three nights. I kept all my clothes on for three days! I had the same feeling I had during the war, only, this time, we were much older and I didn't seem to have much fight left. Every so often, I wanted to give up!

We had three days of power cuts. Jenny managed somehow to get to us with some food and to help us roll back the carpet upstairs to let it dry a bit. It was completely sodden, even the underlay. She had quite a lot of difficulty getting through to her parents and then on to us, as huge trees were blocking the main roads and it was still quite dangerous. We were glad to see her.

Avril popped round with her husband, Jeff, to see how we were. They knew something about building as they were doing their own extension. They brought a large sheet of tarpaulin and covered our dormer roof to protect it from more rain. This proved a help until we could get a builder to come to put another layer of tarpaulin on. We were so grateful for Avril and Jeff's help and moral support at such a time. It was six whole months before we got the dormer roof repaired. Between the insurance company and the builder, they kept us waiting all the time. It was another test of patience. The ceiling downstairs had to be re-painted, too.

The devastation around the countryside was unbelievable. The trees fell like packs of cards. Some woods had not a tree standing, especially the one near Cripps Corner, where we often took Linda for walks. There is nothing left of any landmark now. It seems those memories were wiped off with the trees – and, yet, how could one forget the games we had with Linda – the grandchildren playing hide and seek with her. Then, she would run on ahead and throw herself into a muddy pool – so pleased with herself!

It will be years and years before the majestic beeches are cleared. I feel particularly sad about them because they are my favourite trees.

During Christmas of this year, we joined Dick and Jenny for a holiday in Les Diablerets, in Switzerland. We left them to do the organising. There were many of us together. Jenny's parents, (David and Gladys), her two daughters, (Mandy and Nettie), and her Aunt Bee and Uncle Ron. Suzy also joined us. They booked apartments in a hotel. Unfortunately, our room was quite far from the others and it seemed a great effort to make the trip at least twice a day as there were quite a few steps to negotiate. I wasn't feeling myself at all during these holidays as the altitude affected me. I was short of breath much of the time.

But, it was lovely seeing the beautiful Swiss mountains once again and during my quiet times and when on my own, I would recall the happy memories when we were in these surroundings with the children. They were such carefree days then.

After three days of snow, the sun shone brightly for the rest of the week. We got to know "Auntie" Bee. She is a fine person. We played table tennis together and, in spite of some loss of sight, K.C. was still very good at the game.

We took the cable car further up on sunny days and enjoyed the even more beautiful scenery with a nice cup of hot soup in the little cafe at the top.

Vic (in Chinese bridal ceremonial gown) and Ida (my classmate) at a wedding (1956).

We enjoyed the break, and, especially, a visit from our Swiss friends, the Mullers, whom we had known from our honeymoon days.

We have decided after this holiday that we shall not be going abroad again, but shall be exploring beauty spots nearer home.

It is now May, 1989. I have grown roots in Battle. We have made many friends, who have been very kind and supportive, especially Jane, Pauline, Pearl and Monica and Peter next door. We live near Dick and Jenny, and Daphne and Wendy are within reach. The shops are handy and people are helpful. Sussex is a good and beautiful place to be in.

In all the years we have been in England, we have not been back to Hong Kong. I feel I just wish to retain happy memories of it as it was. The present Hong Kong is not my home. What of my family there? I've been fortunate enough to have happy visits from each of my sisters and brother. Vic, my eldest sister, has been several times and, each time, she has arranged a large family gathering in London. She, of course, doesn't travel now, she is over ninety and is completely blind.

Irene has also visited us in each one of our homes on her trips abroad from San Diego, California. Her daughter, June, with her husband and two boys came and spent a few days with us in Brendon Cottage.

During Irene's visit at Beverley Gardens (1982).

Once again, this summer, we saw June and her older boy, Peter, after a lapse of eleven years. We had much news to catch up with, and we drove them around the lovely Sussex countryside. Peter has grown up into a mature young man any mother would be proud of.

Jean, who settled in Melbourne, visited us several times and together we made trips all over the country visiting her friends. However, this June, when she came with Grace to spend two weeks with us, we just enjoyed a very quiet time together, and did not rush around – content to go gently and just sit and chat in the cool shade of the Magnolia tree, drinking in the peaceful summer days. It is always a pleasure to have Grace with us, as I share a common interest with her in gardening and dogs.

Robbie comes almost every year for a flying visit. We had the pleasure of having him with us in Brendon Cottage for a few days.

Before I finish "My Memories", I must add the memories of another happy occasion which occurred only a week ago on the 19th August. It was my grand-daughter Louise's wedding.

It was a glorious day, I awoke at four in the morning and looked out and watched a spectacular sunrise – the clouds were tinged with various shades of pink. "Surely, this must be a good

With Grace and Robbie during one of his visits (1984).

omen for the young couple – Louise and Danny," I thought. I said a fervent prayer for them "Please God, bless them and their future lives together."

The sea was glistening and gleaming in the sunlight. A light breeze gently cooled the air. The ceremony was held at Marina Pavilion, St Leonards-on-Sea at 11 o'clock in the morning.

Families and friends were gathered together to witness the blessing of the young couple and many joyful hymns were sung. Danny's minister gave a very thoughtful and inspiring address and many prayers of blessing and thanksgiving were given.

After this, we all drifted over to St Leonards' Gardens for photographs; and like all weddings this took a very long time. Louise was radiant and looked very beautiful and Danny was so happy.

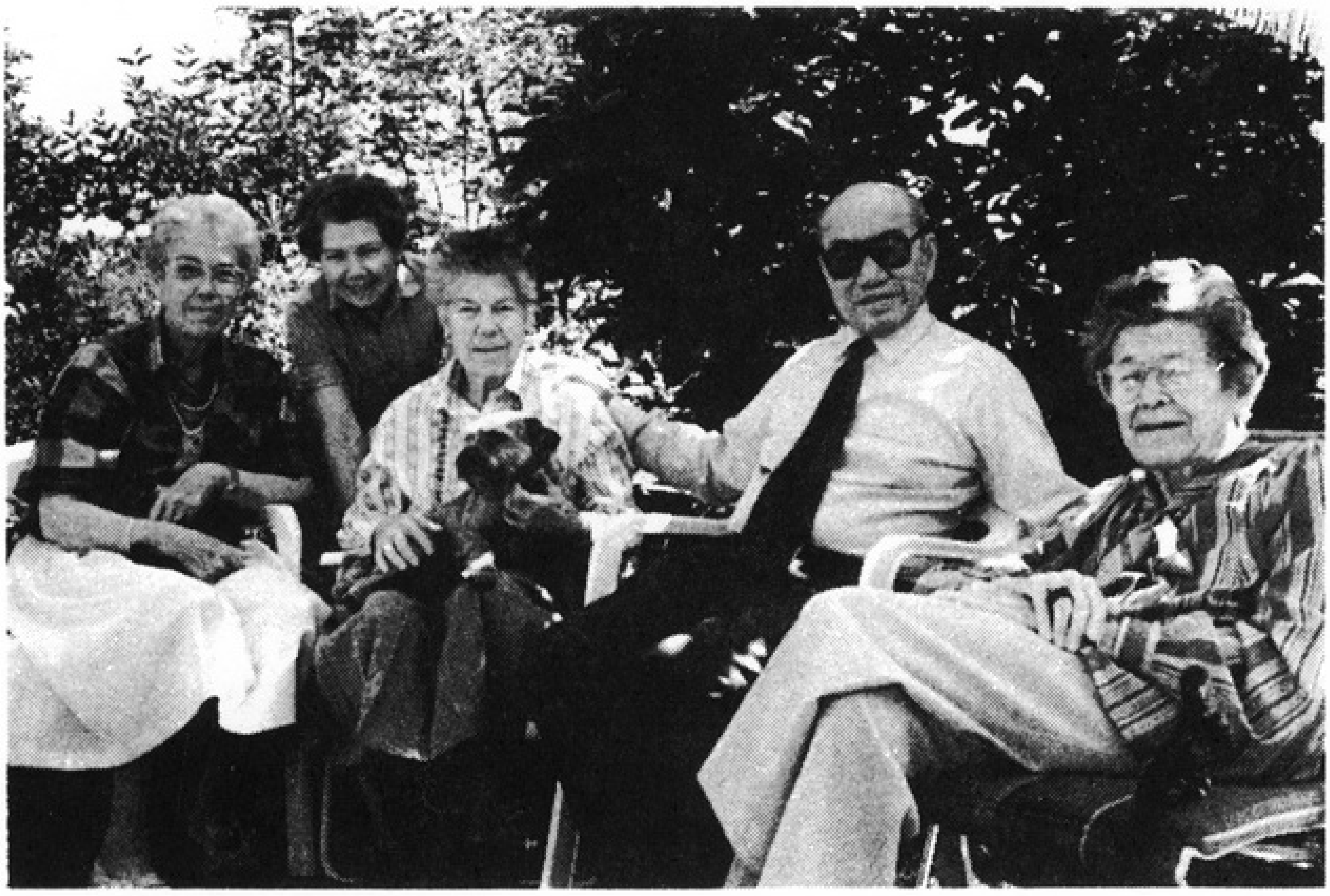
We all drove off to Westfield village hall for the reception when we sat down to a lovely buffet lunch. Everything was very well organised and the hall beautifully decorated. This was a true Christian fellowship in which everyone joined in to lend a helping hand.

We, as a family, were all present except for Dick and Jenny who were stuck in an airport in Italy for six hours! Our grandchildren looked "smashing". Grace and her family came down all the way from Hemel Hempstead to attend the wedding and their presence was much appreciated. We also had a chance to meet Danny's mother and some of his other relatives.

All in all, it was a very happy day for everyone.

So, what of the future? Though physically we are slowly running out of steam and mentally we are not quite so quick off the mark, we hope spiritually we shall still grow with each passing day.

We have a new Rector, David Fricker, who, like David



Under the shade of the magnolia with Shirley, Grace, 'Brock' and Jean during Jean's visit from Melbourne.

Shacklock, is a wonderful teacher. He is a warm-hearted and giving man. Together with his wife, Vera and his family, they will be a true strength to this community. We are, indeed, lucky to have such a spiritual leader.

We are now content to let God guide us into the future. We hope to be able to go to a retirement cottage in Battle eventually, so that we shall have more time "to stand and stare" and enjoy our friends. We shall also be more independent as the cottage is near the shops. We have put "Uplands" on the market – we are leaving things in God's hands knowing that He will be guiding us always.

At the moment, it is summer and we must try to enjoy each day as it comes and savour the colours and scents in the garden and the beauty of the countryside around.

K. C. and Florence Yeo in daughter Wendy Yeo's garden, Winter 1984.

Photo by Christopher Yeo

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